

Motherhood and Medicine

Female physicians have a long history of overcoming unique barriers in their quest to a profession. Gender discrimination, one such barrier, is manifested in pay gaps, glass ceilings, lack of mentors, and outright sexism in the workplace^{1,2}. These factors, gratefully, are receiving more attention in the form of research, publicity, and institutional adjustments. However, despite our best efforts, female physicians are still dropping out of medicine at significantly higher rates than men and reporting unique concerns regarding home-life/work-life conflict³ including maternity-based discrimination⁴⁻⁶. Interestingly, this barrier has been relatively under-investigated with the majority of our information coming from impersonal survey statistics⁷. This project takes a humanities approach to exploring the unique struggles and experiences of female physicians who also identify as mothers. Interviews were obtained from a variety of physician mothers and incorporated into a narrative—narrative medicine being an increasingly popular method of research and a way to share compelling stories. Ultimately, this narrative not only explores intimate details from the lives and careers of physician mothers, it also brings to light how, despite the inequities, physician mothers are *essential* contributors to compassionate, innovative and humanistic medicine.

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