



Suliman S. Olayan School of Business



KIP Research Project

Perception of Physicians on Women Surgeons in Lebanon

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I. Executive Summary

Introduction: The number of women pursuing a career in surgery is significantly low worldwide which has led to a male dominance in this field of study, practice and academic profession. The relevant literature has identified several factors contributing to this deficiency in the healthcare workforce, including gender prejudice at the workplace, the lack of role models in the profession as well as personal level challenges such as family demands. However, very little is known about the perceptions of medical professionals regarding women surgeons, particularly in the Arab patriarchal societies. This area of investigation is of specific concern because of the implications on women's professional success, attractiveness of surgery as a career option for women medical students and the quality of medical care. This study aims to explore/investigate the perceptions of male and female physicians on women surgeons.

Methodology: we conducted a qualitative research, using in-depth interviews with a sample of practicing men and women physicians from varying specialties and backgrounds in Greater Beirut area. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis for emerging themes and recurring patterns.

Results: We interviewed 26 practicing Lebanese physicians (18 men and 8 women) from 3 sites (AUBMC, Makassed General hospital, and Bahman hospital), from both interventional and non-interventional specialties, with different training backgrounds and a variable range of years of practice. We did not detect major differences in physicians' views towards female surgeons regarding professional capabilities and surgical skills. But many thought that they cannot handle stressful situations in the operating room. Many physicians found that female gender is positive



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because women surgeons are more compassionate with the patients and are better communicators. Physicians expressed readiness to refer patients to female physicians, but they believe that the community and patients may not yet accept to be treated by women surgeons.

Conclusion/Implications: Women surgeons practicing in Lebanon are at a disadvantage in both physician and patient acceptance. Changes are needed to improve the acceptance of female surgeons at the level of society, medical institutions, medical schools, and even women themselves.