

## Gender Disparities among Professional Team Sports Medicine Physicians

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### INTRODUCTION:

Although recent trends from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) present encouraging growth of female representation in orthopaedic surgery, the field is still lagging behind other specialties. This study investigates gender disparities among physicians providing care for professional sports teams.

### METHODS:

Information regarding physicians providing sports medicine care to teams in the MLB, NFP, NHL, PHF, NBA, WNBA, MLS, NWSL, USL, USFL, and NFL were obtained from phone surveys of team athletic trainers as well as team websites and search engine queries. Gender, residency, and fellowship training specialization were recorded. Only orthopaedic surgeons and primary care sports medicine physicians were included; all other specialties were excluded. Chi-Square analysis compared gender data of orthopaedic team physicians to that of American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine (AOSSM) membership, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) membership, orthopaedic residency census, and sports medicine fellow census. Primary care sports medicine physicians were compared to American Medical Society for Sports Medicine (AMSSM) and primary-care sports medicine fellowship census data.

### RESULTS:

Among a total of 608 team physicians, 572 (93.5%) were male and 40 (6.5%) were female. Orthopaedic surgeons comprised 63.7% of the physicians. Fourteen (3.6%) team orthopaedic surgeons were female. Primary care sports comprised 35% of the physicians, of which 26 (11.6%) were female. Orthopaedic female team physician representation overall was comparable to AOSSM and AAOS membership gender distribution, but significantly less than orthopaedic surgery residents and orthopaedic sports medicine fellows gender distribution ( $p < 0.01$ ). Only female WNBA orthopaedic team physicians were more represented than female membership among AOSSM, AAOS, and orthopaedic sports medicine fellows ( $p < 0.01$ ). Female primary care sports medicine physicians were underrepresented as a whole in professional sports compared to female AMSSM members and primary care sports fellows ( $p < 0.001$ ). The only leagues with comparable representation with primary care female physicians were the WNBA and NWSL.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

Overall, female representation is poor among orthopaedic surgeons and primary care physicians providing sports medicine care to professional teams. Leagues encompassing female athletes tend to have better representation of female physicians.

**Table 1: Gender and Specialty Training for Professional League Physicians**

League	League Type	Team Count	Male Physicians			Female Physicians			p-value
			Surgical	Non-Operative	Total	Surgical	Non-Operative	Total	
MLB	Male	29	65	40	105	3	4	7	<0.01
NFP	Female	6	0	2	2	0	0	0	<0.01
NHL	Male	32	60	26	86	1	2	3	<0.01
PHF	Female	6	4	4	8	1	2	3	<0.01
NBA	Male	30	54	29	81	1	3	4	<0.01
WNBA	Female	12	12	10	22	2	7	9	0.02
MLS	Male	28	38	10	48	2	0	2	<0.01
NWSL	Female	9	9	5	14	2	4	6	<0.01
USL	Male	19	26	15	41	0	1	1	0.01
USFL	Male	8	8	7	15	0	1	1	0.09
NFL	Male	27	100	48	148	2	2	4	<0.01
Total		206	376	196	572	14	26	40	