

Gender Based Differences in Views of Trauma and Orthopaedics: A Survey of Prospective Trauma and Orthopaedics Surgeons in the United Kingdom

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INTRODUCTION: In 2020, women accounted for 64% of those accepted into British medical schools. As one of the largest surgical specialties, Trauma & Orthopaedics (T&O) has a particularly significant disparity between the numbers of female and male consultants, with only 7% being women. The aim of this study was to understand the current influences, concerns, and aspirations of prospective orthopaedic surgeons within the United Kingdom.

METHODS: This is a prospective, qualitative cohort study. A 20-item questionnaire was designed and disseminated to all delegates registering for a free orthopaedic webinar teaching series via email and social media. Inclusion criteria for this study were responses from anyone who identified as female or male, not in specialty training, and with an interest in pursuing an orthopaedic career.

RESULTS: Of the 747 survey responses, 341 met the inclusion criteria. This included 101 (29.6%) female and 240 (70.4%) male doctors. Both groups cited the most common reasons for pursuing orthopaedics were the practical and technical nature of the specialty (Female: 74/101 (73.3%), Male 196/240 (81.7%)) and job satisfaction (Female: 62/101 (61.4%), Male 134/240 (55.8%)). Most of the participants decided to pursue orthopaedics during medical school. Although, females and males had shared concerns, women were concerned about the physical strength required, pregnancy, and lack of an accepting culture. Whereas, male participants were predominantly concerned by high travel requirements and the quality of their training. Women were interested in a career in trauma, knees, and hand surgery and were more likely to consider a wide range of subspecialties while men were primarily interested in knees, hips, and trauma. Both cohorts considered plastics and general surgery as alternative career choices. Women were also likely to consider other medical specialties such as emergency medicine whereas men were more likely to consider a career outside of medicine.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

The number of female surgeons in T&O is gradually increasing with time. Identifying and addressing both positive and negative influences that impact the career decisions of prospective trainees will aid in increasing this progression further. Reaching out to individuals early in their careers, highlighting diversity, equality, and inclusivity in orthopaedics will attract the most talented future surgeons.