

# How two research projects aim to empower women in medicine

SEP 9, 2020

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While there has been an increase in the number of women physicians in the U.S., discrepancies remain in pay, position and perks between men and women. Little has also been done to address the complex issue of the marginalization of women in medicine and lack of career advancement. This raises two questions: what can be done to help female physicians negotiate contracts, and how can women in medicine be included in more research opportunities?

These are questions that two teams of researchers—from Yale University in New Haven, and Southern Illinois University (SIU) School of Medicine in Springfield, respectively—will set out to answer with the help of grants from the Joan F. Giambalvo Fund for the Advancement of Women.

Every September, the AMA Women Physicians Section (AMA-WPS) hosts Women in Medicine Month to acknowledge pioneering women, celebrate their accomplishments and help cultivate future female physicians. In 2020, the pandemic has posed another set of challenges for women physicians to surmount. This September, the AMA is thanking and recognizing women physicians tirelessly advancing equity and creating change.

The Giambalvo Fund is administered by the AMA Foundation on behalf of AMA-WPS, and awards scholarships of up to \$10,000 to health care researchers to identify and address issues that affect women physicians and medical students.

Here are the research projects that the teams of women from Yale and SIU School of Medicine are working on.

## Creation of a virtual negotiation workshop

Women in medicine continue to face discrepancies in compensation and position compared to men. In part, this is due to discomfort in negotiation tactics by women. However, this can be mitigated through negotiation training opportunities.

While many negotiation workshops require in-person training and interaction, the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified barriers to accessing such programs. Even outside the context of a global pandemic, some women in medicine are unable to join in-person programs due to cost, distance, or lack of awareness.

With these barriers in mind, AMA member Anees Chagpar, MD, professor of surgery at Yale, aims to build and evaluate a negotiation course for female faculty and trainees on a virtual platform. Dr. Chagpar also will assess whether a virtual negotiation course is beneficial to faculty and trainees.

“I cannot adequately express how thrilled I am to have won this very prestigious award ... in part for the award itself, but perhaps more so for the opportunity to design and evaluate a virtual negotiation workshop that can truly be impactful for female physicians and trainees,” said Dr. Chagpar. “It is truly wonderful to partner with the AMA on this important endeavor!”

The AMA offers resources for physicians for advancing gender equity in medicine, including pay disparities and negotiating equitable compensation.

## **Sponsor women in medicine and science**

A critical challenge for women physicians is a lack of opportunities for growth in research, which plays a key role for promotion in academic medicine. While this might be seen as an individual’s inability, it results from social and structural barriers, such as social networks, sponsorship and work-life integration.

These structural barriers can be addressed through the formal sponsorship program, “Research Initiative to Sponsor and Empower Women in Medicine and Science.” The program formally invites women physicians to existing research projects and creates an opportunity to initiate a new project with a sponsor’s support. Through this program, women physicians can participate in the community practice of research to generate scholarly outputs, creating the basis for their career advancement in medicine.

“We are honored to have been awarded a grant through the 2020 Joan F. Giambalvo Fund for the Advancement of Women,” said AMA member Vidhya Prakash, MD, professor of clinical internal medicine at SIU School of Medicine. “What a tremendous privilege to be able to give deserving women in medicine and science at our institution an opportunity to expand their horizons and lead



groundbreaking research, narrowing the gender equity chasm. We are grateful to the AMA for its invaluable support.”

The team of researchers working with Dr. Prakash includes:

- | AMA member Susan Thompson Hingle, MD, professor of clinical internal medicine at SIU School of Medicine.
- | Heeyoung Han, PhD, associate professor of medical education at SIU School of Medicine.
- | AMA member Wendi Wills El-Amin, MD, associate professor of family and community medicine at SIU School of Medicine.

Learn more about gender bias in medical research and three keys to fix it, including sponsorship.