

Health Trends

Female Doctors Help Improve Country's Health Care Prognosis

(NAPSA)—One remedy for the ailing American health care system may be to recruit more women doctors.

A Johns Hopkins University study found that women physicians tend to spend more time with patients, communicate more effectively with sick people and involve patients in their own care more often than do male doctors.

"The most important consequence of the difference is what it inspires in patients responding back to the doctor," says Dr. Debra Roter, a public health specialist at Johns Hopkins. "They are more forthcoming, they talk about sensitive topics and the physician gains more information. The medical dialogue is two-way."

But that improved dialogue isn't just reserved for the examination room. Not only are female physicians more likely to work in teams than male physicians—which often results in improved quality of care—but they also tend to more frequently treat at-risk communities, according to a recent UPI account.

Fortunately, the number of women doctors has risen steadily since 1975, nearly tripling from 9 to 25 percent of the workforce. Additionally, about half of all medical students are now women. However, experts caution that the small number of women in medical school leadership positions could cause those numbers to take a turn for the worse.

Only 11 percent of U.S. medical schools are led by female deans and just 10 percent of depart-

ments are chaired by women, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.

To help reverse that trend, medical schools such as Ross University School of Medicine in Dominica have worked to diversify their leadership. With the recent hiring of Dr. Mary Coleman as dean of the medical school, Ross brought to 50 percent the number


Women in Medicine

While women have made many strides in the medical field, they still have far to go.

 50%
Percent of women medical students

 25%
Percent of women doctors in the workforce

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 10%
Percent of medical school departments chaired by women



of female deans at its campus. Indeed, the school boasts a higher percentage of overall female faculty members (37.3 percent) than the U.S. medical school average of 32 percent, as well as a higher percentage of female department chairs and associate deans.

"We're very proud to be an international leader in diversity, setting an example not just for medical schools but for our students by demonstrating that there

is no position in medicine that's unrealistic for them to strive for," says Dr. Tom Shepherd, president of Ross University.

The school provides medical and veterinary education, offering both a doctor of medicine and doctor of veterinary degree program. Students spend their first four semesters of training in Dominica, their fifth semester in Miami, and five subsequent semesters in clinical clerkships at associated teaching hospitals across the U.S.

Like graduates of other medical schools, the university's graduates are eligible to practice medicine in the U.S. upon successfully completing required licensing exams.

But do women department heads, faculty and chairs have the same impact on students as female doctors have on patients? If the careers of Ross graduates are an indication, the answer is yes.

"The majority of our graduates already secure residencies prior to graduation with some of the most prestigious teaching hospitals and leading medical centers in the U.S.," says Dr. Nancy Perri, vice president of academic affairs at the university and a member of the medical school's first graduating class in 1982. "A significant number of our alumni have gone on to achieve positions as chief residents, earn academic posts at U.S. medical schools, become board-certified specialists and be recognized researchers and practitioners."

For more information, visit www.rossu.edu.