

Careers

A fifth of surgeons in England are female

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Re: A fifth of surgeons in England are female

Dear Editor,

During the last decade, the percentage of women graduates in medicine has increased considerably, in Italy and Europe, and therefore inevitably also those who specialize in general surgery and specialized branches.

The data provided by the Statistical Office of the Ministry of Education of the University and Research (MIUR) for the academic year 2014/2015 show that 45.3% of those enrolled in schools of specialization in general surgery are women.

This figure is certainly positive but, in Italy as in the UK, the percentage of women surgeons who hold top positions in both hospital and university is still very low. The figure for ordinary general surgery professors in Italian universities is exemplary: out of 108 members of the college of ordinary general surgery professors, only 3 are women and as many are those who run a specialization school in general surgery.

Although theoretically today the career and career opportunities offered to women in the surgical world are similar to those of male colleagues, the objective difficulties that women have in reconciling work and family life make career progression much more difficult for them. And the training possibilities. From a cognitive survey conducted by the Italian Society of Surgery (1st SIC Report of Women in Surgery), it emerges that 56% of women believe that having had children has reduced their career path, compared to 16.4% of men.

From the 1st SIC Report Women In Surgery, the future of surgery sees women as protagonists of the scene. The change is now a fact: the percentage of medical women under 50 is 57.2%; this reflects the professional trend of the future.

This scenario reflects the importance of the professional role on women's private life: to date, many colleagues have renounced a family, motherhood and distance from their country of origin, as well

as those who have given up their professional careers due to lack of

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A concrete example is the need to manage offspring, in most situations the full load of the woman. For example, this is not easily combined with working hours and school schedules.

The role of the mother could be better reconciled if there were available company creches that could reconcile organizational and work needs, improving work and personal well-being. This kind of organization would also mean anticipating the return from maternity more easily and with less psychophysical discomfort, favoring the transition from maternity to work reintegration.

The time has, therefore, come to develop new policies, new initiatives and a new organization of work that can take into account the needs of female doctors.

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