

Women in Science- Promoting Excellence and Innovation for Future Development  
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Abstract

Female and male physicians and their pathways in medicine in Austria  
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In Austria, increasing numbers of women complete the studies in medicine successfully, but there are only few women in higher positions. Women were found to be less likely to engage in academic medicine and pursuing a scientific career. Furthermore women usually indicate to perceive science less appealing than the more practical work as physician. Starting a family and having children is often a disadvantage for women as it is mostly women who go on maternity leave and raise children. Moreover, achieving work-life balance is not only dependent on the flexibility of the job and the organisation/institution, but also on other family members (e.g. the "other" parent), facilities such as kindergarten, school, after-school care and a myriad of other factors. Job security, the opportunity to reduce total working hours, and eliminate working hours that are not conducive to child-rearing are only a few examples for a possible balance of private and professional life. Furthermore, men and women are affected in different ways by their work environments. Gender is connected to various areas such as parenthood, hierarchy and competitive behaviour, choice of profession, child rearing and so forth. We argue that gender is a complex variable that impacts career development in various direct and indirect ways.

In this study a questionnaire, covering topics such as family and child-care, vocational choice, academic achievements, work environment, harassment and also future perspectives, was distributed among female and male physicians working in a University hospital. In total 273 physicians participated in the study. The same questionnaire was used in a study on female physicians at a University hospital 10 years ago, hence, offering the possibility to find improvement as well as stagnation in the career paths of female physicians.

We are looking at the differences between men and women regarding their academic qualifications (dissertation, habilitation), the interaction with social influences such as marital status and child-care, as well as differences in harassment during their studies and in their work environment. The study showed that even after 10 years female physicians still face disadvantages to get higher positions. Fewer or no children, being single as well as harassment and inadequate child-care possibilities may be influential in pursuing a career for female physicians.

Results are discussed with regard to the necessary changes of the working environment as well as the development of more possibilities for women to combine their wish to start a family and the pursuit of their career.