

There is a doctor in the house, but she usually gets paid less

As a college professor, many of my students would talk about choosing their professions based on potential salary and lifetime earnings. They wanted the good jobs, the car, the house and the family lifestyle. They understood college was an expensive commitment and many worked 30-40 hours jobs to supplement student loans.

Imagine being a female student graduating from med school. There was no break on tuition, no break on student loans, and no break on setting up a practice. But, when it comes to a starting salary you could find yourself making \$17,000 less than your male classmates.

Some of the general explanations given for lower pay is that female physicians

- choose lower paying jobs in primary care medicine rather than higher specialties
- work less total hours or are not available for on-call duty
- take on part-time schedules for family obligations and lifestyle
- because of their nurturing nature, spend more time with patients which reduces billable income

However, according to Anthony Lo Sasso, professor at the School of Public Health at the University of Illinois at Chicago and lead author of a study on gender physician pay, even when hours worked and medical specialties were factored in it could not explain the discrepancy in pay.

Lo Sasso's study found that even among medical specialties

"... women heart surgeons earned an average of \$27,103 less than men, and females specializing in pulmonary disease earned an average \$44,320 less than their male counterparts."

A 2011 Medscape Compensation Survey of 15,000 physician found that across all areas **male physicians earned 41% more** and even **male primary care physicians earned 21% more than their female counterparts**.

Obviously there is a gender pay gap issue not being addressed. Lo Sasso, found the gender gap averaged \$3,599 in 1999 but by 2008 had reached \$16, 819. Also during the same time, 50% of female physicians were in primary care in 1999, but by 2008 only 30% were in a primary care practice.

Therefore, even if you paid the same price as a male to become a physician and removed the factor of reduced working hours, **there's no guarantee of equal compensation for a female physician whether it's a primary or a specialty practice**.

No guarantee of equal compensation is a lot to ask of a female student who became a physician in order to have a good job, a car, a house and a family lifestyle.