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Female physicians report widespread discrimination on the job

Maternal discrimination -- also exceedingly common -- was linked to higher self-reported burnout among female physicians as well, researchers reported.

By Amy Wallace | May 8, 2017 at 11:18 AM Follow @upi

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A study from the University of California San Francisco found four out of five female doctors have experienced gender or maternal discrimination in the workplace. Photo by [DarkoStojanovic/PixaBay](#)

May 8 (UPI) -- A new study has found that female physicians and physician mothers have reported experiencing workplace discrimination based on gender and maternal status.

In the study, conducted by researchers at the University of California San Francisco, or UCSF, analyzed 5,782 survey responses from female physicians and physician mothers from the Physician Moms Group, an online group of 60,000 female physicians. The researchers found 77.9 percent reported experiencing some type of workplace discrimination.

Additionally, 66.3 percent of women reported gender discrimination and 35.8 percent reported maternal discrimination, with 89.6 percent based on pregnancy and maternity leave and 48.4 percent based on breastfeeding.

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"Despite substantial increases in the number of female physicians -- the majority of whom are mothers -- our findings suggest that gender-based discrimination remains common in medicine, and that discrimination specifically based on motherhood is an important reason," the authors write in the study, which was [published in JAMA Internal Medicine](#).

Maternal discrimination was also linked with higher self-reported burnout. The most common reported types of discrimination were disrespectful treatment by nursing or support staff, not being included in administrative decision-making, and pay and benefits not equal to their male counterparts.

Women who reported maternal discrimination placed also placed higher value on workplace changes that created longer paid maternity leave, backup child care and support for breastfeeding mothers than women who did not report discrimination.

Previous studies have found hospital mortality and readmission rates were lower for Medicare patients treated by female physicians compared to male physicians. Despite this, female physicians are paid less, are less likely to be promoted and spend 8.5 hours more per week on household activities.

"To promote gender equity and retain high-quality physicians, employers should implement policies that reduce maternal discrimination and support gender equity such as longer paid maternity leave, backup child care, lactation support and increased schedule flexibility," the researchers wrote.

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