




The role of women in medicine in a patriarchal society

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Carolina Zaro Correa¹, Cecília Sampaio de Souza², Nathalie Trento Machado³, Paula Fernanda Corrêa⁴ and Eduardo Miguel Prata Madureira⁵

ABSTRACT

The article discusses the role of women in medicine in a patriarchal society, highlighting the historical and current challenges they face. Historically, women have been excluded from the medical profession, limited to secondary roles such as nursing, due to societal biases. While strides have been made and more women are entering medicine, they still face significant inequalities, especially in terms of salaries and access to more prestigious specialties such as surgery and cardiology, which have traditionally been dominated by men. Areas considered "feminine", such as pediatrics and gynecology, are less valued and paid. The article also addresses the impact of personal life on women's careers, highlighting that female doctors, especially mothers, face difficulties in balancing work and family life due to a lack of institutional support. In addition, they have fewer opportunities to reach leadership positions in health institutions. On the other hand, the growing presence of women brings benefits to medicine, including a more collaborative approach to patient care and better results in preventive actions and in vulnerable populations. The article also talks about the need for policies that promote gender equality in medicine, ensuring equal opportunities and combating stereotypes.

Keywords: Medicine, Women, Inequality.

¹ E-mail: czcorrea@minha.fag.edu.br

² E-mail: cssouza@minha.fag.edu.br

³ E-mail: ntmachado@minha.fag.edu.br

⁴ E-mail: pfcorrea@minha.fag.edu.br

⁵ E-mail: eduardo@fag.edu.br



INTRODUCTION

Medicine is a fundamental area for society, responsible for taking care of people's health and well-being. However, throughout history, women's participation in medicine has often been underestimated and limited in a patriarchal society.

In this article, we will evaluate the role of women in medicine in a society dominated by patriarchal structures and discuss the challenges faced by women seeking a career in this field.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Historically, women have been excluded from the medical professions due to social norms and ingrained prejudices. In the past, medicine was seen as an exclusively male field, and women were discouraged or prevented from studying and practicing the medical profession. Educational opportunities were limited for women, and it was common for them to be restricted to nursing roles or secondary health care.

However, over the years, women have broken through these barriers and achieved significant achievements in medicine. The fight for gender equality in the medical profession has intensified, and more and more women are entering the field and playing a crucial role in patient care and medical research. However, still following patriarchal standards, men are assigned the specialties in which it is necessary to be more aggressive and incisive, such as surgery, cardiology and anesthesiology, in addition to these professionals are usually the most prestigious and well paid (NUNES, 1991).

Women, on the other hand, are almost always restricted to specialties related to chronic diseases or to areas that resemble their role in the private space ("housewife of medicine"), such as oncology, rheumatology, pediatrics, gynecology, since they are areas in which it is necessary to be more patient, empathetic and delicate, that is, characteristics considered feminine, it is also not surprising that they are areas in which prestige is most often difficult to achieve and the remuneration is lower (NUNES, 1991).

Women doctors face particular challenges in a patriarchal society. Wage inequality is a persistent problem. This unequal income occurs in different aspects, and alarmingly it is highlighted that female doctors earn an average of 13 thousand reais less than male professional colleagues, which is equivalent to more than 60% of the income of male doctors (WEMEDS, 2023).

In addition, the balance between work and personal life is discrepant, especially for those who are mothers. The lack of institutional support, such as adequate maternity leave and workplace childcare, makes it difficult to reconcile career and family. Women face

greater interference from domestic life in professional life than men, which directly reflects on the time available for professional activities, scientific production and participation in events. It is also observed that they seem to obtain graduate degrees later, precisely because of this relationship between domestic and professional life (MARTA; 2011).

Another challenge faced by women in medicine is gender bias. Even with the increase in the presence and influence of women in Medicine, the highest positions in the professional hierarchy, along with the main decisions in the institutions that provide health services, continue to be occupied, for the most part, by men. This theme is significant, as it opens space for the discussion of equal opportunities for men and women in the occupation of leadership positions (MARTA, 2011).

Despite these challenges, women are playing an increasingly important role in medicine. Their presence brings unique and enriching perspectives, and studies show that gender diversity in the medical team is associated with better health outcomes for patients. In addition, women doctors are leading significant advances in specific areas, such as maternal and child health and gynecology research.

Some authors state that female physicians are more likely than their male colleagues to harmonize the doctor-patient relationship, as they adopt more democratic communication styles, promote collaborative relationships, discuss treatments more, and involve patients in decision-making (SCHEFFER; CASSENOTE; 2013).

In addition, studies also show that the conducts and practices of women doctors can lead to better effectiveness of preventive actions; adapt more easily to the functioning and leadership of multidisciplinary health teams and; lead to optimizing resources, as they are less inclined to incorporate unnecessary technologies; they serve populations in contexts of vulnerability more adequately; and respond to situations that require the understanding of cultural singularities and individual patient preferences (SCHEFFER; CASSENOTE; 2013).

To promote greater gender equality in medicine, it is crucial to adopt measures that encourage women's participation in this area. It is necessary to ensure equal educational opportunities and access to leadership positions, as well as to implement policies that promote equal pay and work-life balance. In addition, it is essential to educate and raise awareness in society about the importance of gender diversity in medicine and to combat entrenched gender stereotypes.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in the elaboration of this study was the bibliographic review, characterizing the research as a theoretical essay. Literature contained in the SCIELO



databases was used, as well as portals with medical content. The terms used were: woman in medicine, gender inequality, female and doctor.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conclusion, the role of women in medicine in a patriarchal society has been challenging and fraught with obstacles. However, women are overcoming these challenges and carving out their space in the medical profession. It is crucial to continue advancing towards gender equality in medicine, recognizing the value and importance of women as health professionals, and working together to create an inclusive and equitable environment for all.



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