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ACTION NEEDED TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUITY IN MEDICAL LEADERSHIP AND THE MEDICAL PROFESSION
International Women’s Day 2020 #EachForEqual

The AMA today called on Governments, medical administrators, medical schools and Colleges, and the profession as a whole to take urgent action to address barriers to gender equity in medicine, and progress record numbers of female doctors and medical students into leadership roles throughout the profession.

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said International Women’s Day is an opportunity to celebrate the contribution of women to medicine, and to call for action to achieve equity within the profession.

“More women than ever before are joining the medical profession,” Dr Bartone said.

“Today, women represent 42 per cent of the medical workforce, compared to about 27 per cent in 1995, and 52 per cent of new medical students are women.

“However, while there are more women in the medical workforce, we are a long way from achieving gender equity.

“Female doctors still earn, on average, 25 per cent less than their male counterparts, across all specialties and wage groups.

“Women are under-represented in leadership positions. In 2019, fewer than one in three medical College deans and government chief medical officers, and just over one in 10 CEOs in large hospitals, were women.

“Women are also under-represented in multiple specialties.

“None of this is because of any issues of competency, interest, or ambition. There are simply some very long-entrenched barriers to women in the medical profession, as there are in many other professions and parts of society.”

The 2019 AMA Gender Equity Summit, which was attended by 70 stakeholder groups, identified structural and cultural changes necessary to improve gender equity.

“These included improving access to and uptake of parental leave, and portability of leave and entitlements for both men and women, particularly for GP trainees,” Dr Bartone said.

“Not only do GP trainees take a significant cut in pay when they leave the public hospital system, they lose accrued entitlements such as parental and carer’s leave, making it much more difficult to juggle work and family.

“This is why the AMA is campaigning for a single employer model for GP registrars to remove this barrier, and we welcome the Federal Government’s recent announcement of a trial in the Murrumbidgee region.

“The AMA recognises that we have work to do as well, and we have been working on a Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

“We have adopted a target of 40 per cent women, 40 per cent men, and 20 per cent flexible for all AMA Councils, Committees, and Boards, with a target of women holding 50 per cent of Federal AMA representative positions overall by 2021.”

Recommendations from the AMA Gender Equity Summit:

- Establish targets for representation;
- Report and publish gender equity data;
- Provide access to leave entitlements, including for general practice registrars;
- Address gaps in interstate portability of entitlements for doctors working in the public health system;
- Improve access to and uptake of parental leave and flexible work arrangements for men and women;
- Implement transparent selection criteria and processes for entry into training and employment;
- Provide access to breastfeeding facilities and childcare at exams, conferences, and work;
- Identify gender equity champions; and
- Encourage capable women to apply for leadership roles.

The 2019 AMA Gender Equity Summit Report is at <https://ama.com.au/ama-gender-equity-summit-report>

Background

- In 2019, only about 30 per cent of deans, chief medical officers, and medical College board or committee members were women, and only 12.5 per cent of CEOs in large hospitals were women. (Source: *Medical Journal of Australia*)
- A 2019 study found that women make up only 15 per cent of cardiologists, 15 per cent of general surgeons, and 4 per cent of orthopaedic surgeons. (Source: *Internal Medicine Journal*)
- Research by Medicine in Australia: Balancing Employment and Life (MABEL) shows that the wage gap between men and women in medicine is about 25 per cent, even accounting for differences in time spent with patients and other factors, including having children.

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