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Addressing the gender gap in critical care

A “persistent and pervasive” gender gap in academic critical care medicine is highlighted in a recent article in *Critical Care Medicine* by Geeta Mehta, MD, of the Department of Medicine and Interdepartmental Division of Critical Care Medicine, Sinai Health System, University of Toronto, Canada and colleagues from Canada and the UK (Mehta et al. 2018). The paper is the latest in a number of reports that highlight the disparity between the proportion of female intensivists in the healthcare workforce and their representation in conference faculty, editorial boards and critical care society leadership (Modra et al. 2016; Mehta et al. 2017).

Dr. Mehta and colleagues analysed women’s participation as faculty in three international and two national critical care conferences held between 2010 and 2016. They found that in all the meetings reviewed male speakers outnumbered female speakers, with the gap more marked among physician speakers than speakers from nursing and allied health professions. The Society of Critical Care Medicine conference had the highest representation of women, and together with the UK Intensive Care Society State of the Art meeting showed a significant increase in proportion of female speakers over time.

You might also like: [Women in Leadership in Intensive Care Medicine](#)

The authors note: “We do not propose gender parity over excellence, nor do we propose arbitrary percentages of women...our proposals are based on representation of the gender demographic of our specialty and the provision of equal opportunities for equally meritorious women and men. We advocate for the invitation of women who are as qualified and accomplished as their male peers and who would enrich a program.”

They propose four organisational strategies to increase women’s participation as speakers at critical care conferences, including policies that have gender equity objectives based on merit, 30-40% females on programme committees, publication of metrics and an international speaker’s directory. Dr. Mehta told *ICU Management & Practice* that the Critical Care Canada Forum is working to improve its gender balance at its next meeting.

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