

**Debate**

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE TEACHING-RESEARCH OF ANATOMY IN MEDICINE:  
THE GENDER ISSUE

## THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE TEACHING-RESEARCH OF ANATOMY IN MEDICINE IN CANADA

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In Canada, Anatomy Departments/Divisions teach clinical gross anatomy. This includes both gross anatomy and clinical anatomy that is taught as two separate courses in some countries. It should be noted that Anatomy faculty may also teach embryology, histology, and/or neuro-anatomy as these subjects are as often do not have separate administrative units. As medical school curricula evolved, stand-alone courses in gross anatomy, embryology, and histology were discontinued. Presently, clinical gross anatomy to medical students is usually delivered in "System based" blocks covering basic science and clinical material spanning the first two years of medical school. Longitudinal anatomical curricula spanning four years of medical school are in various stages of development.

At the University of Toronto, the Division of Anatomy is part of the Department of Surgery. For the past 10 years we have had a female Chair, Dr. Cindi Morshead. Previously, as the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, we also had one female Chair, Dr. Jane Aubin. Both individuals have Doctor of Philosophy Degrees (PhD). The anatomy faculty, a total of 9 individuals, are classified as holding either a full-time tenure stream or teaching stream appointment. Presently there are three faculty members, two female and one male, who hold the rank of Professor (tenured), one male faculty member at the rank of Associate Professor (tenured) and one female faculty in a tenure stream position at the rank of Assistant Professor. There are three full time teaching

stream faculty, all female, holding Assistant Professor (Teaching Stream) or Associate Professor (Teaching Stream) rank. In addition, there are two part time female Teaching Stream faculty. One faculty member has an MD degree and other faculty hold degrees from professional programs including Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Dentistry.

The Temerty Faculty of Medicine MD admissions, University of Toronto, website reports the following admission statistics into the 4-year MD program (percentage male/female/unreported): 27/65/8 (2022), 35/52/10 (2021), 43/57/0 (2018), 50/50/0 (2014). The reported graduation rate is high, ranging from 97-98% for the last 3 years.

At the University of British Columbia, the anatomical sciences are taught by faculty in the Department of Cellular and Physiological Sciences. For the medical undergraduate program, we have a distributed medical program with faculty members at three remote campuses who hold appointments through their host universities. In this description I will focus only on those who teach anatomy at the UBC Vancouver campus. While there has not been a female Head of Department in the past 10 years, the position of Director of Gross Anatomy who was in charge of both the Body Donation Program and the various teaching endeavours in gross anatomy was held by a female faculty member for 8 years. Faculty who teach gross anatomy are either

tenure-track professoriate positions – both in the teaching and the research stream – or non-tenure track lecturer positions. Currently, there are 7 faculty members dedicated to teaching gross anatomy in undergraduate programs and the health professions. Of these two are female, one holds a tenured Professor of Teaching position and the other is appointed as a lecturer. Both female faculty members have MD degrees, while the male faculty members have PhDs. Of the tenure track positions, four are in the Educational Leadership stream and one is a research position. Histology is taught by a separate cohort of faculty. The main teaching responsibility is held by a female faculty member who is a Professor of Teaching and by a female lecturer.

The American Association for Anatomy (AAA) and the American Association of Clinical Anatomists (AACA) are the main anatomical professional organizations in North America. The AAA has had 4 female presidents and the AACA two female presidents since 2001.

Equitable gender representation is a stated goal for Canadian post-secondary institutions. The majority of our undergraduate students are female, and this is not reflected in the Professoriate yet. Targeted recruitment to enhance diversity is having an impact and this benefits students who learn the anatomical sciences with a more equitable approach.