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Letter From the Editor

The gender gap in academic dermatology and dermatology leadership: Supporting successful women dermatologists[☆]



"I think it's insulting. What are you 'having?' A party? Another slice of pie? 'All' implies that a woman staying home with her kids is somehow living a life half-full. What we're really talking about is doing it all. How do we help women do all the things they want to do?"

[Kirsten Gillibrand, New York Senator ([Alter, 2014](#))]

Women are the majority of dermatology trainees ([Bae et al., 2016](#)) and nearly half of practicing dermatologists ([AAMC, 2016](#)). Despite this record number of women entering the dermatology workforce, women still do not have equity in leadership positions. In academic dermatology, women hold mostly junior faculty positions, comprising only 31% of full professors and <25% of dermatology chairs in 2015 ([AAMC, 2015](#)). Women dermatologists are not promoted at the same rate ([AAMC, 2015](#)), and despite higher entry into academics, they are more likely to leave.

Why have we not yet reached and maintained gender equity? Women are at a curious time. We are more likely to work full time compared with several decades ago ([Pew Research Center, 2015](#)) but still take on more of the household management and parenting compared with our male partners. In other words, we are having it all but have not let anything go. As [Westervelt \(2016\)](#) says in her blog post, "Doing all of it at the same time was never the idea." Particularly for our younger, female workforce, the intense demands of parenting young children while trying to build a career is a recipe for work-life imbalance (or dis-integration).

For the past several years, women dermatologists (and supportive men) have been discussing some of these challenges and offering solutions—some based on data, many based on real-life experience—at talks presented at the Annual Meeting of the

American Academy of Dermatology session "The Gender Gap in Academic Dermatology and Dermatology Leadership: Problems and Solutions." Many of the articles in this issue are the result.

There is a tangible strength in women supporting each other. [Estes \(1995\)](#) tells this story: "I once dreamt I was telling stories and felt someone patting my foot in encouragement. I looked down and saw that I was standing on the shoulders of an older woman who was steadying my ankles and smiling up at me. I said to her, 'No, no, come stand on my shoulders, for you are old and I am young.' 'No, no,' she insisted, 'this is the way it is supposed to be.' I saw that she stood on the shoulders of a woman far older than she, who stood on the shoulders of a woman even older, who stood on the shoulders of a woman in robes, who stood on the shoulders of another soul, who stood on the shoulders..."

Conflict of Interest

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NA.

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[☆] No human subjects were included in this study. No animals were used in this study. [☆] No human subjects were included in this study. No animals were used in this