

WOMEN IN CARDIOLOGY

VIEWPOINT: VOICES IN CARDIOLOGY

Women Empowerment in Cardiology

The Pink International Young Academy of Cardiology



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“We must believe that we are gifted for something, and that this thing, at whatever cost, must be obtained.”

—Marie Curie (1)

It has been widely discussed that women across the world face multiple challenges when pursuing their career of choice. Medicine, as a competitive and evolving field of science, demands great sacrifice and extreme commitment. Cardiology puts extreme physical and psychological pressure on physicians, often testing the final limits of their endurance. For a variety of reasons, cardiology attracts women less than other subspecialties.

The lack of career progress, family responsibilities, radiation exposure and its impact on female reproduction, and the discrimination and sexual harassment that are still present today are among the most common challenges in the career path of every female doctor. Despite the improvement of gender disparities in the last few decades (2), women cardiologists are still struggling with all of these issues on a daily basis.

These challenges faced by each and every woman in cardiology and the uneven playing field motivated several like-minded and strong individuals to create an organization that will raise awareness and stand

united for equal rights, which today we proudly call Pink International Young Academy (Pink IYAC).

The Pink IYAC project was initiated as a council under the International Young Academy of Cardiology (IYAC), a new international group free of membership fees that was established under the auspices of the Cardiovascular Academy (CVA) in July 2019 to promote the interests of all young female doctors working in the field of cardiovascular disease worldwide. IYAC, recognizing the valuable contributions of women in cardiology, promoted the creation of this group. Currently, more than half of the IYAC board members are women, and all board members (both women and men) support projects designed by Pink IYAC to encourage female cardiologists to be more active in the field and work on an equal basis to men.

Pink IYAC, as one of those, does not pretend to stand alone, but it truly believes each group may help women in different aspects of their careers and that unifying strengths would help in achieving higher results. For this reason, Pink IYAC has already started to collaborate with other organizations, such as Global WIC.

What makes Pink IYAC different from the others is its first aim to build a community where women who experience difficulties or obstacles can feel free to share their experiences; not only they will not be judged, but they will also be listened to by colleagues who have passed through similar situations and can provide support. It is a relief to find comfort in other people's voices, and this is one of our aims. This is the first step toward identifying a problem and addressing its solution.

Furthermore, solutions and alternative pathways can be found if a wide network is present. The Pink IYAC, in fact, aims largely at improving the recruitment of talented young female researchers from across the globe, particularly those who have been

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**ABBREVIATIONS
AND ACRONYMS**

CVA = Cardiovascular Academy

IYAC = International Young Academy of Cardiology

Pink IYAC = Pink International Young Academy

locally underrepresented in research teams or struggle to enter the academic track.

Currently, academic female cardiologists are defined by the research they are performing and, consequently, the publications produced. However, for many women, it is not simple, because research is the result of teamwork, and often, women are excluded.

Because of this, Pink IYAC is offering support for those female colleagues who have a project with great potential, both in terms of experienced researchers who would give suggestions on how to structure it and also in terms of people helping with data collection and/or writing manuscripts.

Pink IYAC is trying to promote projects while maintaining the authors' identity the purpose of the group is to help female cardiologists develop their ideas and feel mentored, from the conception of a project up to the final version of the manuscript. We are very proud to have embraced a family culture with regular virtual meetings and active participation of all members.

Aware of the steps that had been taken the preceding months, Pink IYAC started coming together as an organization in November 2019. The first social meeting was held in December 2019 in Vienna, Austria, with the goal of encouraging more female cardiologists to join the group and with the result of transforming, in just a short time, the Pink IYAC group into a platform that allows female cardiologists to express themselves freely, participate in new projects, and foster support for their own projects. As a matter of fact, since the initial meeting, membership

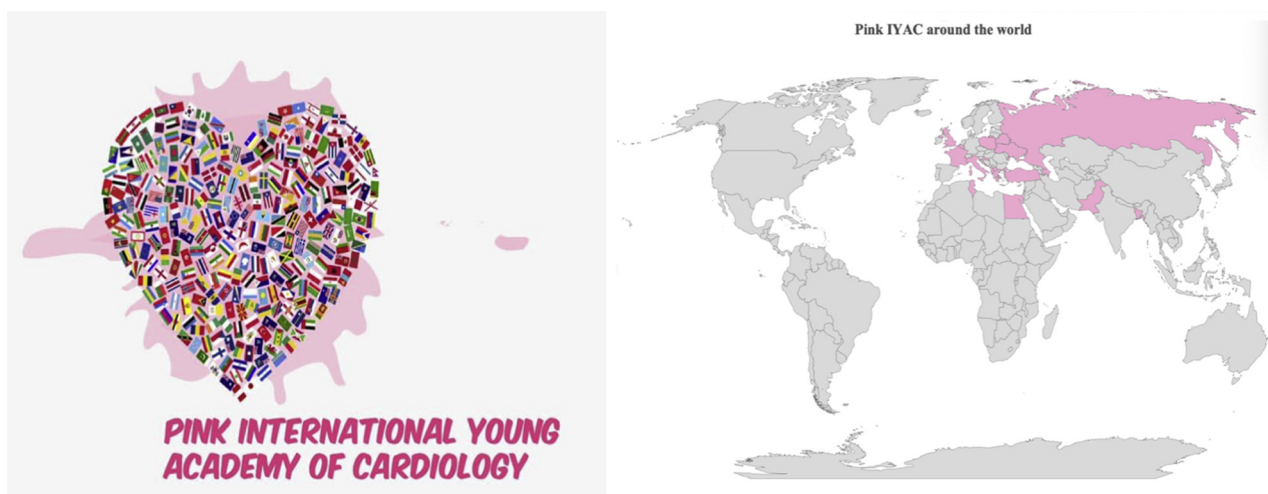
of the Pink IYAC group has increased rapidly, with many talented female cardiologists from around the world choosing to join (Figure 1).

Indeed, the recruitment of talented young female researchers from across the globe has allowed the beginning of many research projects that are currently under revision. The first steps of the group have been taken during the ongoing severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 pandemic, with the intent to realize something useful for the doctors fighting against the disease. As a consequence, an inaugural paper (3) of Pink IYAC has been launched addressing several useful topics on this field, such as the influence of pregnancy on coronavirus 2019 mortality risk, the incidence of cardiomyopathy from coronavirus 2019 during pregnancy, the breastfeeding issues during the pandemic, and the difficulties of women working on the front lines with patients (3).

Moreover, in September 2020, pink IYAC is going to be a vital part of the IYAC annual congress, having organized its own section, where it will interview female leaders as well as emerging female leaders from all over the world about their experiences. Additionally, we are going to organize joint webinars with other important women's organizations to increase women's voices in cardiology.

With regard to future goals, as the Pink IYAC community, we believe in looking into the next steps. This is reflected in our plans, where we strive to create trust and an unbreakable bond between us and the millions of women who want to collaborate with our community. Because the 21st century is a time when social media is brighter than ever before, we

FIGURE 1 The Pink IYAC Logo and the Countries Where Pink IYAC Is Currently Active



aim to be more active on all major social media platforms to ensure that we can reach all women around the globe. In addition, steps will be taken to bring Pink IYAC to the level of advancement where it can hold special sessions in its name at major conventions, such as at the annual conferences of European or American societies, where we hope it can shine as a significant community in the field of cardiology. Nevertheless, a mentoring program has been established where talented women will use their experiences in a one-to-one relation to help women who are facing hard times.

Last but not least, we hope that Pink IYAC meetings will be held in all countries around the world and become occasions where we can freely present our goals and the plans that we have for the future. In these meetings, we hope that all women of Pink IYAC take an active part in representing not only Pink IYAC but also their country by showing the world articles and case reports.

Thus, each and every goal we have for the future has one idea and one idea only: to help female cardiologists from all over the world. Regardless of what situations they might be in or what they are struggling with, our group must and will do whatever it is in its power to help all female cardiologist break through the obstacles in their paths toward achieving their full potential, which is so magnificent.

AUTHOR RELATIONSHIP WITH INDUSTRY

The authors have reported that they have no relationships relevant to the contents of this paper to disclose.

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