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# Resuscitation Plus

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## Editorial

# WISER: A Women's international group to Inspire, Support and Empower women in Resuscitation



Women supported by other women are more successful. Studies in the business sector reveal that women with supportive female networks and female sponsors are more likely to advance in their careers than those without.<sup>1,2</sup> Sponsorship differs from mentorship.<sup>3</sup> A sponsor proactively advocates for their protégés' career advancement, including access to opportunities.

Despite gains in recent years, women still remain underrepresented in resuscitation science. Positions of leadership,<sup>4</sup> editorial boards,<sup>5</sup> and lifetime achievement award lists in resuscitation are predominantly male.<sup>4</sup> Since 1985, the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation has only awarded its highest honour, the title of 'Resuscitation Giant', to three women: Professors Mary Fran Hazinski (2010), Maaret Castren (2021), and Laurie Morrison (2021).<sup>4</sup> A recent paper on the difficulties encountered in early career cardiac arrest research surveyed nine researchers, only three were female.<sup>6</sup> Our lead Journal, *Resuscitation*, has only recently appointed a female editor (Assistant Professor Shir Lynn Lim) and its Editorial Board are predominately male. It is, however, great to see that *Resuscitation Plus* has taken a proactive approach since its inception, by appointing Professor Janet Bray as an Associate Editor and ensuring 50% of the Editorial Board are women.

The lack of female leadership and recognition is a complex issue, and the exclusion of women may not be intentional but related to unconscious biases.<sup>7</sup> Women may not be stepping up for such roles

due to significant competing roles, imposter syndrome, inadequate mentorship or inaccessible stewardship. Recognising the obvious gaps and targeted changes aimed at equity are necessary for this to improve.

Since 2010, the American Heart Association (AHA) has taken a proactive stance on gender inclusivity, launching the Women in Resuscitation session at the Resuscitation Science Symposium. The primary objective of these sessions has been fostering an environment conducive to the advancement of women in the field. Over the years, these sessions have garnered significant interest, boasting diverse speakers and covering topics pertinent to women's experiences. However, during the November 2023 gathering, spurred by earlier discussions at the European Resuscitation Congress, it became evident that an annual meeting alone was inadequate to address the breadth of women's needs and perspectives. A pressing need emerged for a global platform where women could convene regularly to network and delve into issues unique to their experiences in resuscitation science. Thus, the Women's International Group to Inspire, Support, and Empower Women in Resuscitation (WISER) was founded.

The creation of WISER marks a crucial step forward in gender equity; fostering inclusivity and empowerment for women within the resuscitation community. The mission of WISER is in its name: to inspire, support and empower women in resuscitation (Fig. 1). By



Fig. 1 – WISER logo.

**Table 1 – Key hurdles faced by women as identified in the WISER sign-up survey.**

Career Stage	Biggest hurdle themes
Early Career	Balancing family, clinical time and research Funding
Mid-Career	Time and competing priorities Lack of mentorship and networks
Senior	Balancing time Lack of recognition Succession planning

\*They were asked to provide this in five words or less.

providing a dedicated network for women to connect, share insights, and advocate for their needs, WISER promises to catalyse positive change and propel our field toward greater gender equity.

At inception our goal is to host interactive sessions with female leaders in Resuscitation to tackle the tough female-specific elements of juggling a career and help each other reach our goals. This is a forum where transparency, honesty, truth, and the realities (good and bad) are brought to the forefront. No topics are considered out of bounds. A forum in which freely sharing the ups and downs of a career in research and medicine are both valued and desired. These sessions will be held bimonthly online and face-to-face at leading resuscitation conferences. As this is an international group, we will change the times of these meetings to accommodate women members globally. The sessions will not be recorded with access by confirmed membership to provide a safe space for women to speak freely and share. To date, 186 women from 37 countries have registered. When registering women were asked to state in five words or less what was the biggest hurdle they currently faced in their careers (Table 1). We aim to target these themes in our sessions.

Esteemed Professor Laurie Morrison gave our inaugural online talk on April 16th 2024 to 68 women. Her message:

- Establish your legacy in science
- Share your skill set with others and be inclusive; collaborate
- Listen carefully: it is a special skill
- Be comfortable adapting your skill set to ensure continued relevance
- Manage your identity (e.g., ORCID, Google Scholar) and make it public
- Sentinel elements in any relationship are trust, respect and generosity
- Failure is integral to success
- Bad things happen to good people
- Always try to take the high road when the worst happens: protect the individual, assess the situation, apply the right methods, right tools and right timing, give it your best and move on
- Learn to ask for help in all walks of life as it builds collaboration and respect and you will learn a lot
- Each of us are enough, we do not need to do everything for everyone, enable others to shine
- The spirit of WISER exists in each of us

We intend for WISER to be a forum for transparency, honesty, seeking truth, and celebrating solutions for the challenging realities women face. The path forward for this community is not fully defined giving us the freedom and flexibility to choose the path that is WISER.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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