

NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine Gender Equality Policy Statement

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine Gender Equality Policy Statement sets out our commitment to gender equality for all our academic staff.

2. RATIONALE

- 2.1. Across the world, there is an increasing call for gender equality as “equality for women means progress for all”¹.
- 2.2 In Singapore, our government has articulated the same and we at NUSMed, are committed to achieving a gender-equal fraternity not just for fairness and social justice, but for our society to benefit from the potential of our faculty members in its full force^{2,3}.

3. HOW FAR WE HAVE COME

- 3.1 As a nation and as a School, we have come a long way in the quest for gender equality. Our boys and girls have equal access to quality education. Seventeen years ago, the 1979 quota which capped female enrolment to one-third of the medical school intake at NUS was lifted. In 2018, the intake of female matriculants entering medical school at NUS outnumbered the males, comprising at least 55% of the total cohort⁴. This phenomenon is similarly noted worldwide in countries like the United States of America^{5,6} and Britain.^{7,8}
- 3.2 In a bid to recognise the substantial contributions of women in science and medicine, and to support gender equality at the faculty level, NUSMed actively supported the formation of the NUHS Women in Science and Healthcare (WISH) voluntary organisation in 2017.

4. WHAT WE RECOGNISE

- 4.1 Be that as it may, among other forms of gender inequity, women physicians and scientists continue to be under-represented in certain specialities as well as in areas like tenure and leadership positions⁹, journal authorships^{10,11} and speaker invitations^{12,13}. This attests to the fact that gender disparity in medicine reaches beyond the walls of academia, into clinical and research domains¹⁴.
- 4.2 In Singapore where we are faced with an overall decrease in fertility and a rapidly ageing population, it is even more pertinent that we maximise the talents of half of our healthcare

workforce¹⁵ to ensure that women are sufficiently represented across all spheres of academic medicine for the benefit of our nation and beyond our shores.

- 4.3 We have a pipeline of equally qualified female doctors and scientists but their advance in medicine and academia has not kept pace with their male counterparts. We recognise that this “leaky pipeline” is a function of systemic factors which may include bias (both implicit and explicit¹⁶), organisational constraints, organisational culture¹⁷, systems and policies, societal norms and values, as well as biological reasons because the prime years for child-bearing and child-rearing coincide with advanced training and early to mid-career progress¹⁸.
- 4.4 Women bring a different voice and a different perspective to solve many problems facing academic medicine today. Data consistently shows that diverse leadership promotes higher quality of care, enhances scientific discovery and provides role models for young women who are embarking on their scientific or medical careers¹⁹.

5. OUR COMMITMENT

- 5.1 We aim to build on the work that has been done to create an environment and shape a culture within the NUS YLL SoM that advances gender equality. This will be done through the newly created Equal Opportunities and Career Development (EOCD) office, which was set up by NUSMed’s Office of the Dean in 2019.
- 5.2 We aim to ensure that women are able to not just enter but advance in their medical and scientific careers.
- 5.3 To do so, we will work towards:
 - (a) raising awareness;
 - (b) facilitating access and promotion for women;
 - (c) addressing misperceptions and unconscious bias in the clinical and medical sciences;
 - (d) plugging the leaky pipelines of women in academic medicine; and
 - (e) offering both men and women equal opportunities and rewards in academia²⁰.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The definitions in this glossary are from UNICEF²¹.

Gender disparities

Statistical differences (often referred to as “gaps”) between men and women, boys and girls that reflect an inequality in some quantity.

Gender equality

The concept that women and men, girls and boys have equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realizing their full potential, human rights and dignity, and for contributing to (and benefitting from) economic, social, cultural and political development. Gender equality is, therefore, the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play. It is based on women and men being full partners in the home, community and society. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men and girls and boys are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups and that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes and prejudices about gender roles. Gender equality is a matter of human rights and is considered a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.

Gender equity

The process of being fair to men and women, boys and girls, and importantly the equality of outcomes and results. Gender equity may involve the use of temporary special measures to compensate for historical or systemic bias or discrimination. It refers to differential treatment that is fair and positively addresses a bias or disadvantage that is due to gender roles or norms or differences between the sexes. Equity ensures that women and men and girls and boys have an equal chance, not only at the starting point, but also when reaching the finishing line. It is about the fair and just treatment of both sexes that takes into account the different needs of the men and women, cultural barriers and (past) discrimination of the specific group.

OFFICE OF THE DEAN
YONG LOO LIN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

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- ¹⁷ Shannon, *supra* note 2.
- ¹⁸ *Supra* note 5.
- ¹⁹ <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/where-are-all-women-deans>
- ²⁰ Gan, *supra* note 4.
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