

Sources of Patient-Care Income, Work Settings, and Age of Male and Female Psychiatrists

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Over the past two decades, the gender distribution of psychiatrists has shifted. The percentage of female psychiatrists increased from 14 percent in 1982 to 25 percent in 1996 (1), and the trend is likely to continue, given that 44 percent of psychiatric residents in 1995–1996 were female (2).

In May 1996 a total of 970 randomly selected members of the American Psychiatric Association (a 71 percent response rate) provided data for the National Survey of Psychiatric Practice, a descriptive study designed to provide representative national data on important issues in psychiatry (1). This column summarizes differences in sources of patient-care income, work settings, and age of male (N=713) and female (N=256) psychiatrists.

Figure 1 shows sources of patient-care income by gender. Female psychiatrists received more of their patient-care income as salary than did male psychiatrists, who received a greater

percentage of income as fee-for-service payments.

Gender differences in other practice characteristics were consistent with differences in sources of income. For example, male psychiatrists reported spending a greater percentage of patient-care time in solo office practice (42 percent) and in group office practice (10 percent) than did female psychiatrists (37 percent and 7 percent, respectively). On the other hand, female psychiatrists spent a greater percentage of time in public and private clinics and outpatient facilities (21 percent compared with 15 percent).

When asked to indicate the setting where they spend the most hours in outpatient care, a greater percentage of male psychiatrists reported individual practice (53 percent) compared with female psychiatrists (41 percent). A greater percentage of female psychiatrists spent most of their outpatient care hours in group practice (51 percent) compared with male psychiatrists (43 percent).

Figure 2 shows the age distribution by gender. Seventy-nine percent of female psychiatrists were under the age of 55, or in the early or mid stages of

their careers (3), compared with only 54 percent of male psychiatrists.

Further analysis is needed to assess whether differences in the practice characteristics of male and female psychiatrists are related to differences in their age distributions. Nevertheless, given the observed differences, monitoring the changing demographic characteristics of psychiatrists and their relationship to practice characteristics will be increasingly important. ♦

Acknowledgments

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References

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Figure 1

Sources of patient-care income by gender

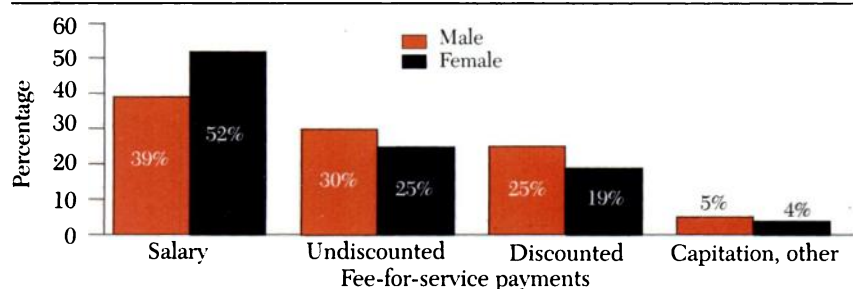


Figure 2

Psychiatrists by gender and age

