



The IMO received excellent feedback from delegates at the IMO Conference on Gender Equality in Medicine which took place in the Gibson Hotel on Saturday the 18<sup>th</sup> of February. Over 80 doctors, medical students and invited guests attended the conference where expert speakers discussed the themes that emerged from the IMO Survey on Gender Equality in Medicine.

**Dr Catherine Day** opened the conference with a speech setting the **wider societal context of gender equality** both in Ireland and in Europe. Dr Catherine Day was the first female Secretary General of the European Commission (2002-2015) and Chaired the Citizen's Assembly on Gender Equality.

Dr Day highlighted that while Ireland often appears to be ahead of other countries on issues such as the referendum on gay marriage, Ireland in fact lags behind many other countries in terms of equal treatment before the law. She spoke of the work of the Citizen's assembly and their proposals for constitutional change. The issues that arise in the IMO survey reflect many of the issues in the report of the Assembly and she hoped that the IMO would continue to pursue this agenda.

Vanessa Hetherington presented the **Results of the IMO Survey on Gender Equality in Medicine** which covered an array of themes from parental roles, childcare, pregnancy and breast-feeding, bullying and harassment, equity of earnings, career choices, discrimination and leadership. The presentation was followed by a panel discussion hosted by GP, Dr Madeleine Ní Dhálaigh.

**Dr Sarah Fitzgibbon**, founder of the Women in Medicine in Ireland Network, told how many of the issues resounded with the members of her network and how women and men needed to support women in leadership roles. **Dr Rachel McNamara** discussed issues around the training model and how in the context of the great resignation, and how simple changes to support women could help attract and retain women in the medical workforce such as breastfeeding and childcare facilities, and assuring women in training are not penalised for taking pregnancy leave. **Dr Paddy Hillery** talked about having a young family and how males are now taking a more active role in parenthood. He spoke though of how some of his own career choices would not have been possible without his wife and how the availability and cost of childcare was an ongoing concern. **Dr Ina Kelly** spoke of the affects that bullying and sexual harassment can have on individuals and teams and the importance of gender equality in medicine for patients. **Dr Syeda Amna Azim** spoke of the additional cultural and systemic biases faced by International Doctors. She spoke of the need to acknowledge the issue and called for transparency around access to training and consultant posts ensuring that posts are awarded on the basis of merit.

The panel discussion was followed by **Dr Suzanne Crowe, President of the Medical Council** who gave her personal reflections on **Gender, Equality in Medicine, Work Life Balance and leadership**. She recounted some of her own experiences of pregnancy and working in the Children's Hospital in Crumlin. She spoke of how we would all be patients at some stage and in addition to looking after children we would all probably need to look after elderly relatives as well. She stressed the importance of self-care among doctors and the need for all doctors to have their own GP.

The Education and Training Session hosted by Dr Clive Kilgallen heard from three excellent speakers on **initiatives to advance Gender Equality in Medical Education and Training**. **Dr Sarah Fink**, Head of Athena Swann Ireland explained the **Athena Swann** Charter and the awards system, explain what initiatives educational institutions needed to be put in place to achieve the awards. **Professor Anthony O'Regan** looked to other jurisdictions and their **experiences of implementing less than full time (LFT) training**. He highlighted the challenges of less than full time options where an NCHDs working week is on average 50-60 hours and even 0.8 of 48 hours a week would still be a full working week in the eyes of most. He highlighted flexible working was not just a gender issue and that in the Netherlands the flagship of LFT training and childcare was provided to all frontline workers. **Mr Pdraig Kelly**, RCSI Associate Director Operations, Planning and Postgraduate Education, discussed the circumstances that led to the RCSI to work on gender equality and Surgery and the **PROGRESS report**. He discussed the success of the RCSI Women in Surgery Fellowship and how the gender diversity is rebalancing year on year and year, but that ongoing challenges remained.

After a presentation from Ms Nives Paic of IMOFS on the pay and pensions gap, Ms Susan Clyne wrapped up the morning session and the learnings and initiatives that IMO would seek to progress on foot of the conference.

In the afternoon the delegates broke into two groups to participate in the interactive sessions. **Dr Gozie Offiah**, explained the theory of intersectionality and the different **unconscious biases** that we develop. Taking examples from her own PhD, Dr Offiah discusses real-life examples of bias and discrimination and the actions we can take to address the situations.

In the **Active Bystander Training** session, **Professor Louise Crowley** educated participants on how recognise all forms of sexual hostility, harassment and violence; and the group discussed practical ways to empower participants to stand up safely and call out poor behaviour.

Feedback from all participants in the conference was resoundingly positive, applauding the calibre of speakers and topics covers and with many seeking further engagement and education on the issues raised.

## The IMO Gender Equality Conference, February 18<sup>th</sup> 2023 – The day in photographs



L-R: Dr Madeleine Ní Dhálaigh, Dr Clive Kilgallen, Dr Catherine Day.





Dr Catherine Day, Former Secretary General of the European Commission and Chair of the Citizen’s Assembly on Gender Equality.



Panel discussion; L-R: Dr Syeda Amna Azim, NCHD Committee Member, Dr Rachel McNamara, Chair IMO NCHD Women in Medicine Working Group, Dr Paddy Hillery, Consultant in Emergency Medicine, Dr Sarah Fitzgibbon, GP and founder of Women in Medicine Ireland Network, Dr Ina Kelly, Former IMO President and Chair of IMO Women in Medicine Working Group, Dr Madeleine Ní Dhálaigh, IMO GP Committee.







Dr Suzanne Crowe, President of the Medical Council





L-R: Mr Pdraig Kelly, RCSI Associate Director Operations, Planning and Postgraduate Education, Dr Sarah Fink, Head of Athena Swann Ireland, Professor Anthony O'Regan, Dean of the Institute of Medicine and Chair of the Task Force on the NCHD Workforce.







L-R: Susan Clyne, CEO of IMO and Nives Paic, IMOFS.



Dr Gozie Offiah, Senior Lecturer and Director of Curriculum at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.



Professor Louise Crowley, School of Law, University College Cork and Director of the LLM (Children's Rights and Family Law at UCC).