

UNSPOKEN ISSUE

Bringing taboo and controversial topics to the forefront, in some cases anonymously.



A couple of years ago at an ASCRS meeting, I had dinner with a large group of surgeons and industry representatives. It was a fabulous dinner, with great food and even greater conversation. At one point, the discussion turned to disparities in the workplace and, more specifically, in medicine.

One surgeon mentioned her experience as a junior member of a practice, another about her experience as a female key opinion leader and about her tenure within a practice.

Being a woman in my late 30s, I was, naturally, interested in what these highly respected, well-known surgeons were saying. Yes, I knew that the wage gap existed (in 2019, women earn \$0.79 for every \$1.00 a man makes),¹ but I was a little less educated on other areas of workplace disparity. For instance, women being overlooked for partnerships due to

their gender, junior surgeons not having flexibility in changing their office hours to fit business travel needs, women being told that they are too aggressive on the podium, and the list goes on.

At that same ASCRS meeting, CRST also hosted what we call “think tank” sessions with some of our editorial board members. These smaller, more intimate meetings tend to provide great insight into the minds of cataract and refractive surgeons, and allow us to continue covering topics that you actually want to read about. In several of these sessions, people spoke about wanting to read more articles on the taboos in ophthalmology, for instance, what physician extenders really do, selling over-the-counter medications in the practice, and how opioid prescriptions are being used in ophthalmology.

Through these conversations, an idea started to percolate among the CRST

staff. What if we gave surgeons the platform to speak anonymously about these and other topics? Surprisingly, after sending out an email to our editorial board discussing this “anonymous” issue, many of the contributors decided they wanted their byline with their article.

Disparities in the workplace do exist, and individuals are not always open to taboo thoughts and practices, but hopefully—and as this series of articles demonstrates—there will always be a platform for open and intelligent discussion. ■

1. Elkins K. Here's how much men and women earn at every age. <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/04/02/heres-how-much-men-and-women-earn-at-every-age.html>. Accessed September 24, 2019.

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