

# Occurrence of Discrimination, Bullying, & Harassment in the Medical Profession- - and Its Importance



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# Disclosures

- AAOS (committee member)
- AOA (committee member)
- ASSH (committee member)
- POSNA (committee member)
- RJOS (board member)
- Globus consultant (spouse)

# Objectives

- To recognize prevalence of discrimination, bullying, and harassment in healthcare
- To understand how these factors impact one's career and well being

# Background



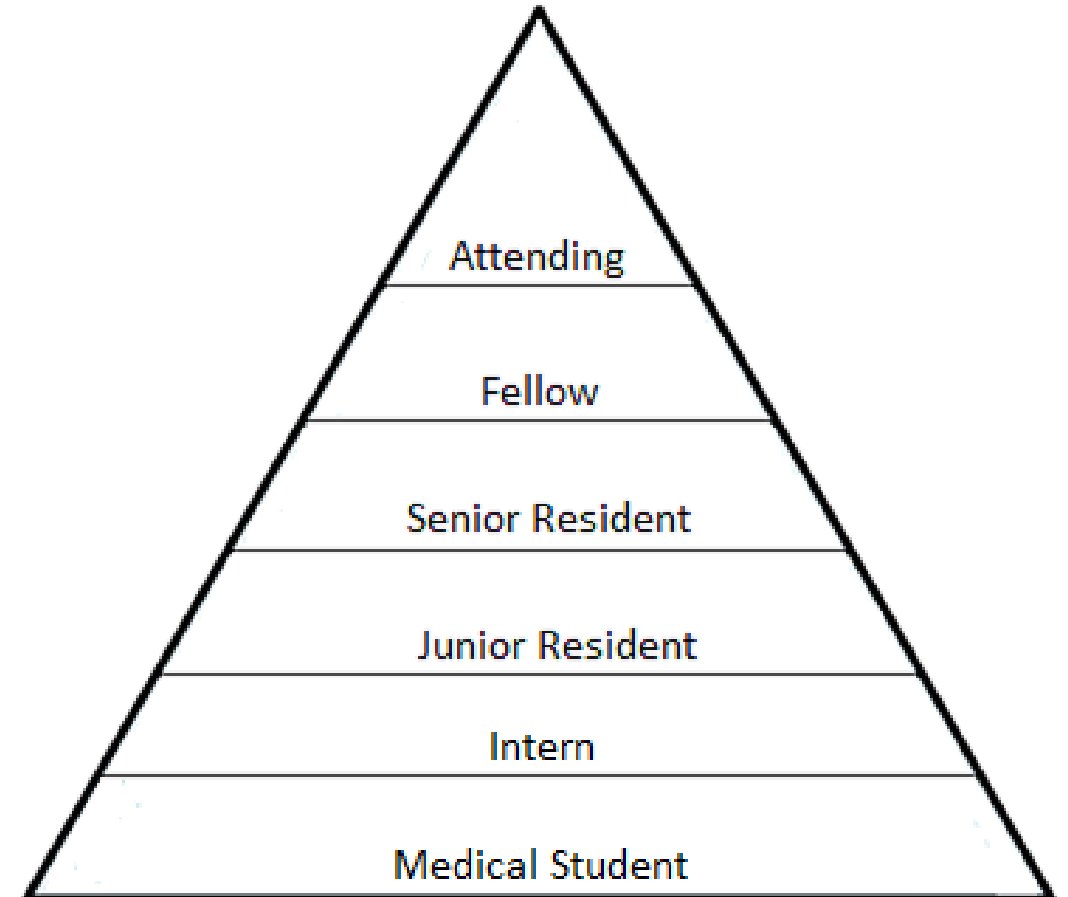
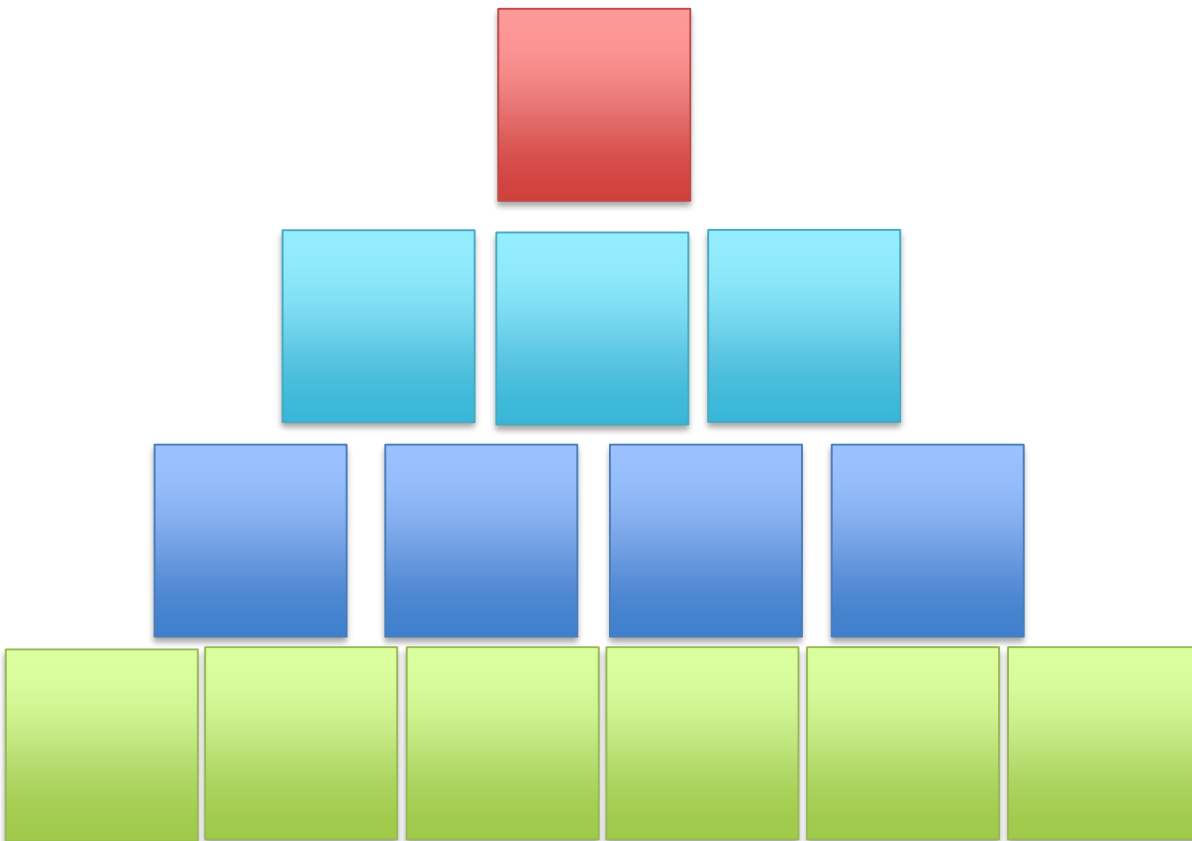
- Recent high-profile cases have highlighted discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment, and harassment occurring in multiple professions, businesses, and organizations
- Culture in the workplace reflects the values, attitudes, and beliefs of its leaders/providers
- The culture within the surgical community is particularly susceptible to harassment, bullying, and discrimination

# Background

- A work climate that enables bullying, harassment, discrimination, and microaggressions can negatively affect a person's health and career
- Leads to:
  - Increased turnover
  - Decreased teamwork
  - Higher baseline of anxiety/chronic stress
  - Increased “lateral violence”
  - “Toxic culture”
  - Reduces the joy of medicine

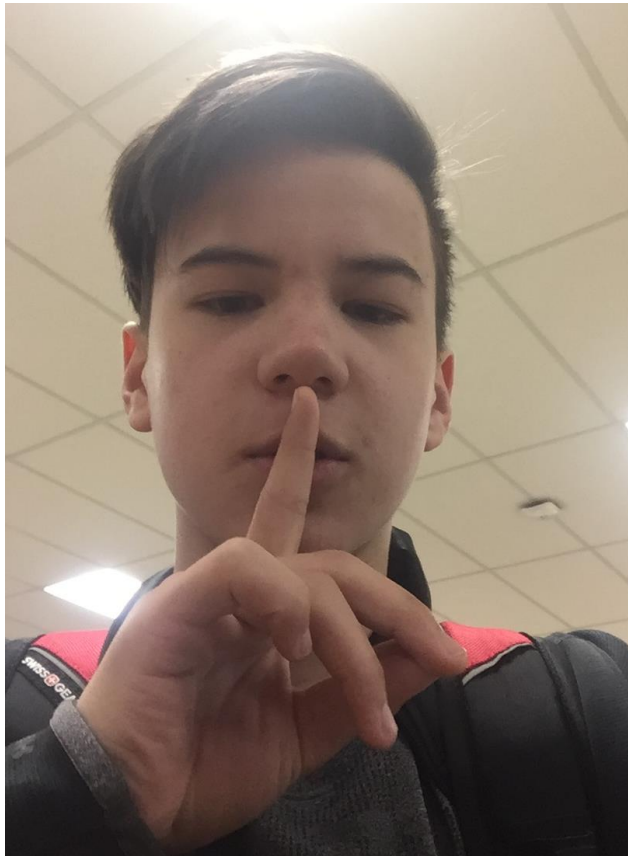
# Why is Surgical Field at Risk?

- Hierarchical structure



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- “Code of silence”





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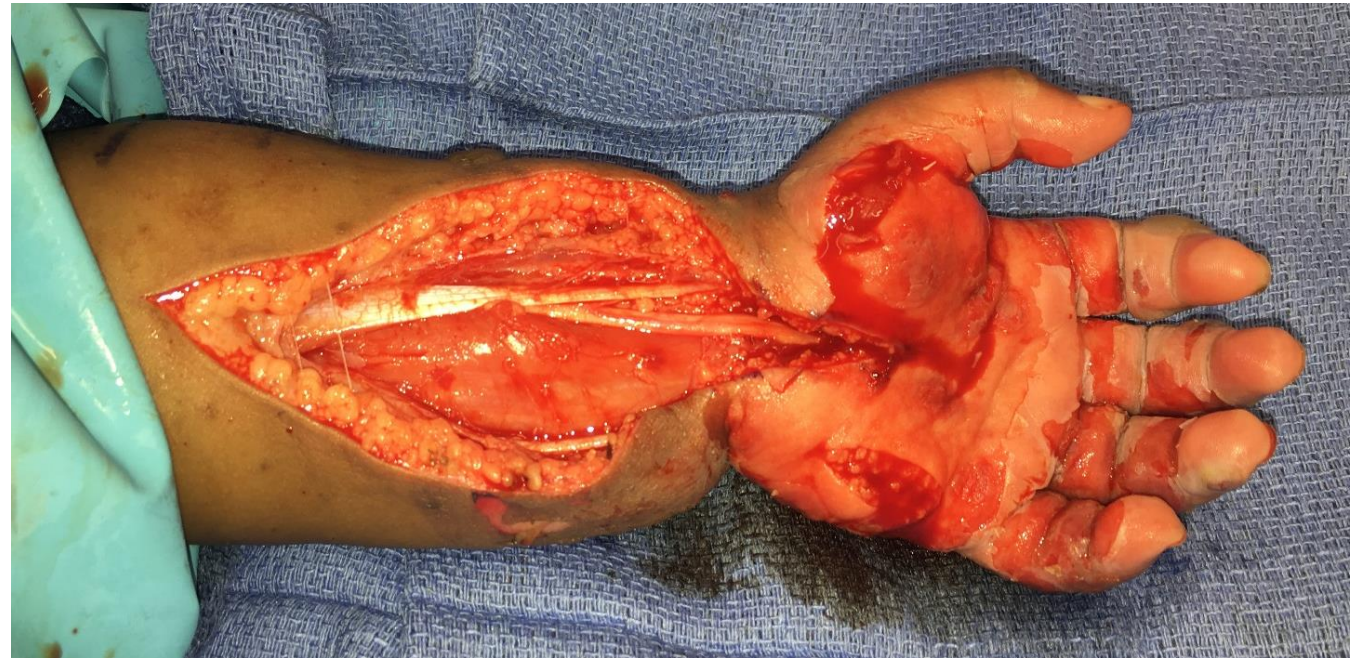
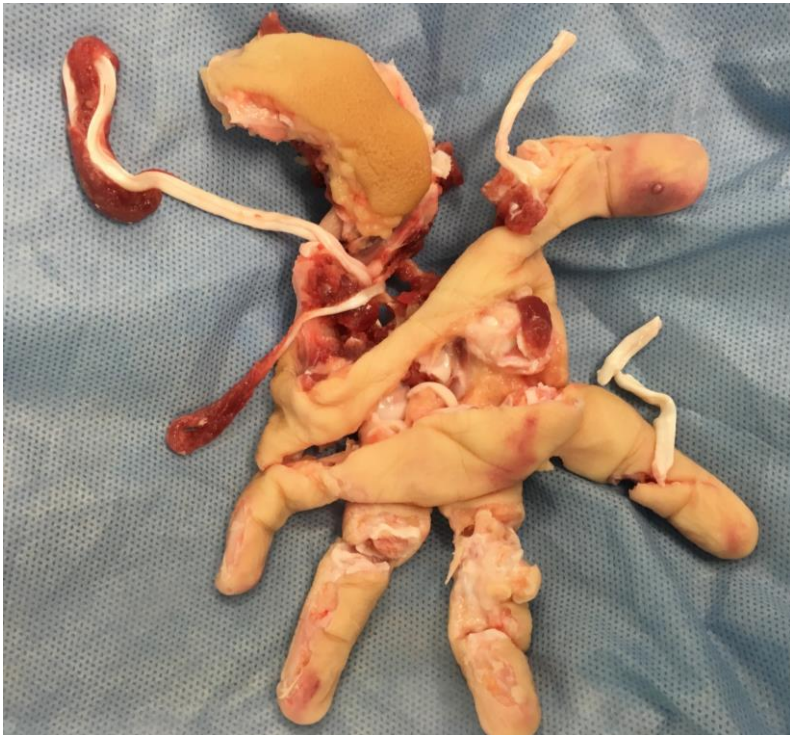
- Hierarchical structure
- “Code of silence”
- Fear of retaliation





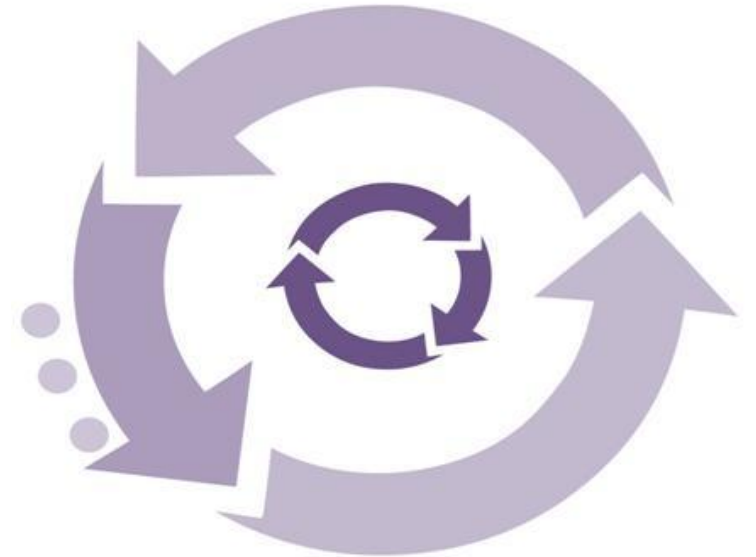
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- High stakes/stress environment



# Why is Surgical Field at Risk?

- Hierarchical structure
- “Code of silence”
- Fear of retaliation
- High stakes/stress environment
- “Cyclic” behavior
- “Normalized” behavior

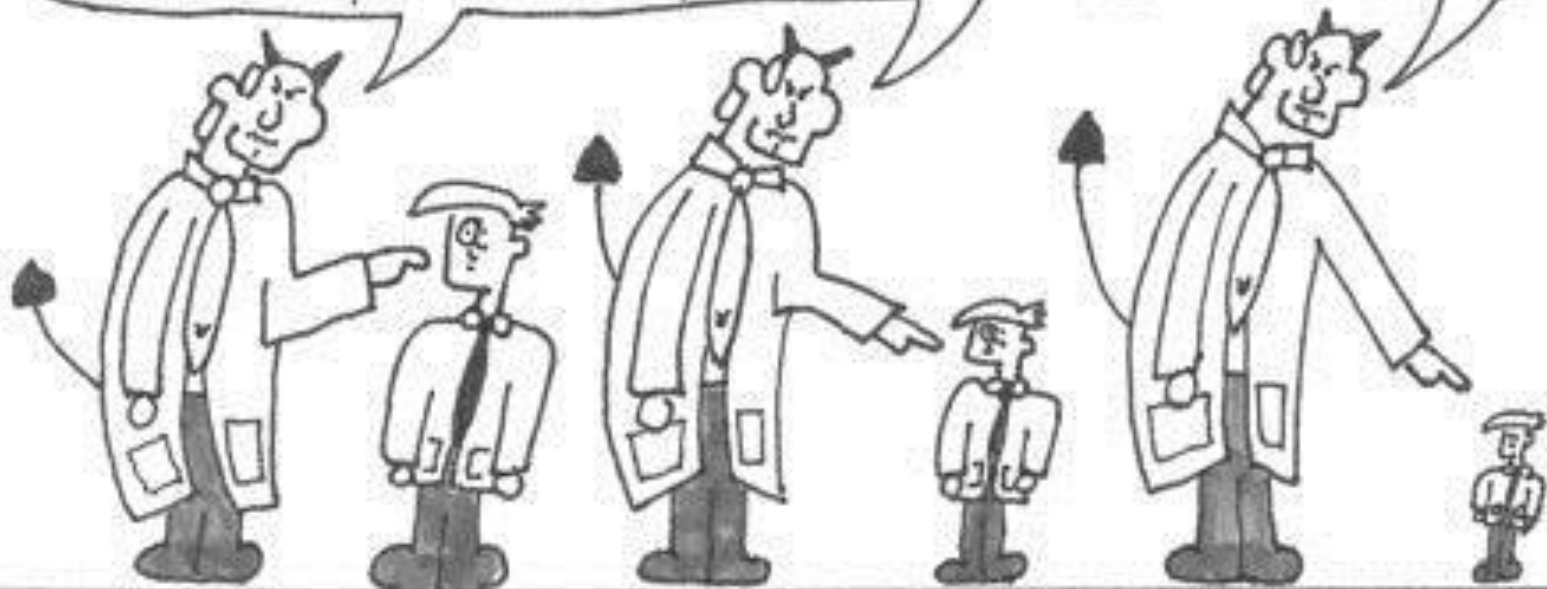


# Bullying Definitions

- The systematic abuse of power
- Abusive conduct akin to psychological violence and is characterized by threatening, humiliating, or intimidating actions or words

WHY DIDN'T YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO ME APPROPRIATELY?  
YOUR PATHETIC PRESENCE DOESN'T EXCUSE SUCH BEHAVIOR!! I'M TOO  
IMPORTANT TO BE BOTHERED WITH YOU! YOU DON'T MATTER! TODAY, YOU  
JUST WATCH, DON'T TALK, AND DON'T ASK QUESTIONS! GOT IT?

NEXT PATIENT  
IS HERE!



# Bullying Definitions

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- Aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing that is carried out repeatedly and involves an imbalance of power, either actual or perceived, between the victim and the bully

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- Repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators



# the medical hierarchy: a visual guide







- A US Workplace Bullying Survey conducted by the Workplace Bullying Institute in 2007 reported that 49% of workers are victim of or witness to bullying

Kelly S. Workplace bullying: the silent epidemic. N Z Med J. 2004;117:U1125

# RACS experience

- 39% experienced bullying
- 18% discrimination
- 19% harassment
- 7% sexual harassment
- Culture of fear and reprisal- victims unable to speak out

Expert Advisory Group on Discrimination, Bullying and Sexual Harassment. Summary of Facts 2015.  
Crebbin et al. Prevalence of bullying, discrimination, and sexual harassment in surgery in Australasia. ANZ J Surg 85 (2015): 905-909.



# Medical Students



- 42% of US medical students experienced harassment
- 84% of US medical students experienced belittlement



- 20% of first year medical students in the UK experienced bullying and harassment



- 74% of Australian medical students experienced shaming during teaching

Timm A. 'It would not be tolerated in any other profession except medicine': survey reporting on undergraduates' exposure to bullying and harassment in their first placement year. *BMJ Open*, 2014;4(7):e005140.

Frank E, et al. Experiences of belittlement and harassment and their correlates among medical students in the United States: longitudinal survey. *BMJ*, 2006;333(7570):682.

Fnais et al. Harassment and discrimination in medical training. *Acad Med* 2014.



# Bullying:

## *many ill health effects*



- Workplace bullying leads to poor mental health, low self-esteem, high levels of absenteeism, and low levels of workplace productivity
- Loss of control, loss of identity, destroys confidence, and reduces resilience
- **Emotional symptoms:** hostility, nervousness, hypersensitivity, social isolation
- **Physical symptoms:** chronic fatigue, stroke, sleeplessness, and suicide

**Shanafelt TD**, Balch CM, Dyrbye L, et al. Special report: suicidal ideation among American surgeons. *Arch Surg*. 2011;146:54–62.

**Pei KY & Cochran A**. Workplace bullying among surgeons: the perfect crime. *Ann Surg* 2019; 269:43-44.

**Tye Williams S & Krone KJ**. Chaos, reports, and quests narrative agency and co-workers in stories of workplace bullying. *Management Comm Quarterly*, 2015;29:3-27.

**Matthiesen SB & Einarsen S**. Psychiatric distress and symptoms of PTSD among victims of bullying at work. *Brit J Guidance & Counselling*. 2004;32:335-356.

**Namie G, Namie R**. US workplace bullying: some basic considerations and consultation interventions. *Consulting Psych J: Practice & Research*; 2009;61(3):202-219.

# National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) Report

- Sexual harassment is common across scientific fields, including medicine
- As many as 50% of female medical students reported experiencing sexual harassment

*The National  
Academies of*

SCIENCES  
ENGINEERING  
MEDICINE

# Sexual Harassment in Surgery

- Anonymous electronic survey distributed to members of ACS, Association of Women Surgeons (AWS), and social media platforms
- 1,005 survey responses
- 74% of respondents were women (18% response rate)
- 25% respondents were males (1% response rate)
- 51% academic, 13% community, 15% private practice

# Results

- 58% of women, 25% of men experienced sexual harassment in preceding 12 months
- Women trainees were more than twice as likely to experience harassment compared to attendings
- Verbal or physical conduct 53%; unwanted sexual advances 23%; comments about sexual orientation 10%
- 84% of incidents were not reported
  - fear of negative impact on career, fear of retribution, fear of being dismissed, fear of inaction





*The* NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL *of* MEDICINE

Perspective  
JANUARY 18, 2018

## Sexual Harassment in Medicine — #MeToo

Reshma Jagsi, M.D., D.Phil.



## EDITORIAL

# #MeToo and the medical profession

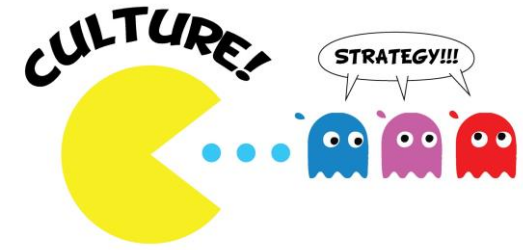
Jayna M. Holroyd-Leduc MD, Sharon E. Straus MD MSc

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2018 August 20;190:E972-3. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.181037



**Organizational Factors: Poor leadership, power imbalances, implicit or unconscious biases, and a culture of silence**

# Culture of Academic Medicine



- Female faculty report lower sense of belonging and relationships in workplace
- Self-efficacy for career advancement lower in women
- Women perceive lower gender equity
- Conclusion: those whose identities and values are not traditionally those of the institutional culture, or who feel different or are perceived as different → experience exclusion, marginalization, and alienation

Pololi LH, et al. Experiencing the culture of academic medicine: Gender matters, a national study. J Gen Intern Med, 2012.



Ruth Jackson  
Orthopaedic Society

# AAOS Survey



- 2018 Work Environment and Culture Survey to AAOS members: collaborative effort initially developed by representatives from AAOS (the Diversity Advisory Board and Women's Health Advisory Board), Ruth Jackson Orthopaedic Society, Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America, American Orthopaedic Association, and Perry Initiative



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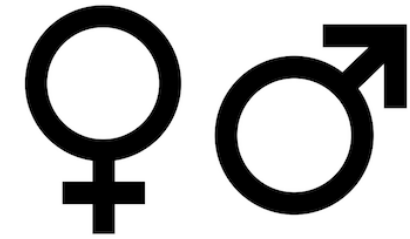
THE PERRY  
INITIATIVE



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEONS  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEONS

The survey examined the prevalence of:

- **discrimination**—treating a person with an identified attribute or personal characteristic less favorably than a person who does not have that attribute or characteristic
- **bullying**—a behavior or pattern of behaviors that a reasonable person would expect to victimize, humiliate, undermine, or threaten a person to whom the behavior is directed
- **sexual harassment**—an unwelcome sexual advance, request for a sexual favor, or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature by which a reasonable person would be offended, humiliated, or intimidated
- **harassment**—an unwanted, unwelcome, or uninvited behavior that makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated, or offended



- The survey was sent to a subset of female or URM members from all member categories
- A matched set of male members was surveyed for comparison
- Response rate 16%
- Sex-specific response rates were 27% women and 9% men
- 30% of the respondents had been in practice >20 years, and 24% had been in practice 1-5 years

# Results

- **More than 50% of AAOS members who completed the survey—males and females of all races, ethnicities, and ages—reported that they have experienced discrimination and bullying**



- Discrimination was reported at a much higher rate in females (84%) than in males (59%)
- African-American and Hispanic members reported a higher rate (85%) of discrimination than Caucasian members (78%)
- Females also reported higher rates of bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment
- Up to one third of respondents said they have experienced harassment
- More than 50% of female and 10% of male members have experienced some form of sexual harassment

# Next Steps?

- Survey asked what actions are required to assist in the prevention of such behaviors in the current workplace: the most prevalent (70%) response was **greater leadership** by surgical department/division heads and supervisors
- At least 50% wanted **better support mechanisms** and **resources** for more effective compliance and resolution procedures in the workplace
- Females were more likely than males to report that such actions are needed



# Next Steps

- AAOS published an opinion on ethics and professionalism surrounding sexual harassment
- AAOS developed an anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policy/procedures

## *Opinion on Ethics and Professionalism*

### **Sexual Harassment**

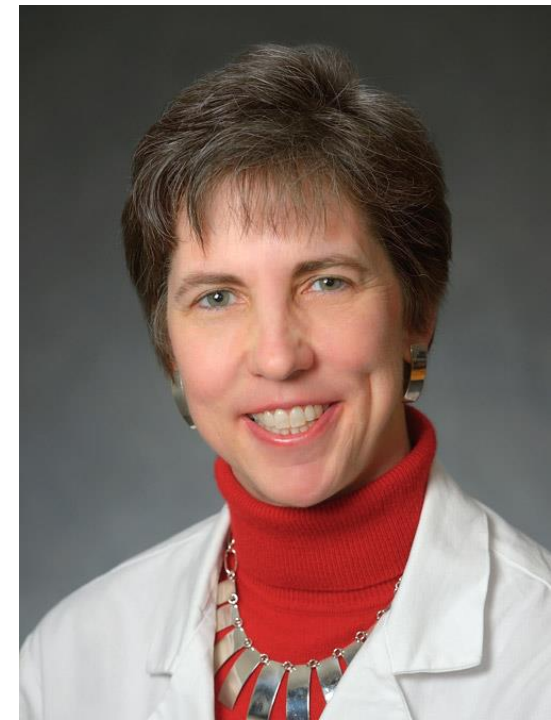
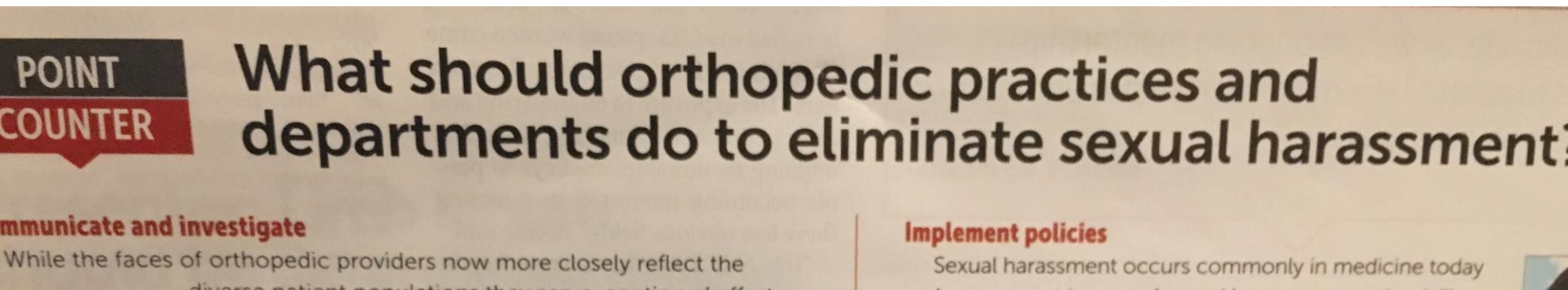
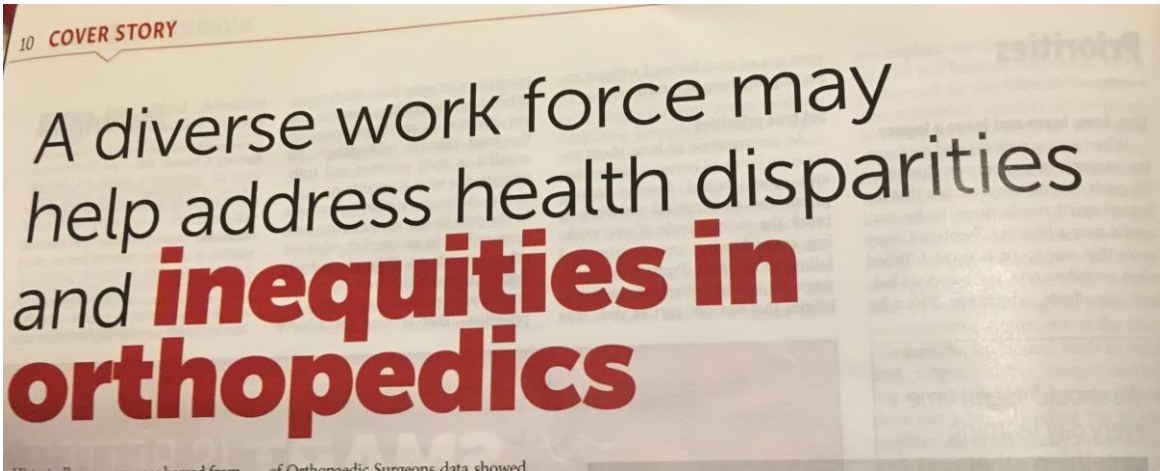
*An AAOS Opinion on Ethics and Professionalism is an official AAOS statement dealing with an ethical issue, which offers aspirational advice on how an orthopaedic surgeon can best deal with a particular situation or circumstance. Developed through a consensus process by the AAOS Committee on Ethics and Outside Interests, an Opinion on Ethics and Professionalism is not a product of a systematic review. An AAOS Opinion on Ethics and Professionalism is adopted by a two-thirds vote of the AAOS Board of Directors present and voting.*

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons promotes an environment of respect, professionalism, fairness, integrity, empathy and inclusiveness. These values are reflected in the AAOS Principles of Medical Ethics and Professionalism in Orthopaedic Surgery and Code of Medical Ethics and Professionalism.

## Sexual Harassment and Bullying: A Conversation

By: [Jennifer M. Weiss, MD](#), and [Terry Stanton](#)

- #notonmywatch
- Women in leadership roles and mentorship roles → critical
- Dr. Weber →
  1. Empower women
  2. Educate the profession on implicit bias
  3. No-tolerance policy



# Conclusion

- Harassment, Bullying, and Discrimination are prevalent within healthcare
- These experiences negatively affect the work/learning environment, minimize the joy of medicine, and deleteriously impact personal well being
- We will need to evaluate our current culture, organizational hierarchy, develop transparent reporting processes, and enhance training to minimize these occurrences



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