

Women in GI Symposium



Christina Surawicz, MD

University of Washington School of Medicine
Seattle, WA USA



Delegates and speakers posed for a photo after the Women in GI session.

The positive energy in the room was palpable at the first ever Women in GI session at the World Congress of Gastroenterology in Istanbul in September 2019.

The speakers were Guadalupe Garcia Tsao and Christina Surawicz from the United States, Carolina Ciacci from Italy and Nurdan Tozun from Turkey, with moderators Naima Amrani from Morocco, who is the first woman president of the WGO, Maryam Al Khatry of the UAE and Hale Akpınar also of Turkey.

Prof. Amrani has stated that one of her main objectives while serving as WGO President is to engage more women in WGO activities around the world. This symposium served as a

launch for those initiatives.

Topics included:

- Career Opportunities for Women in GI
- Role of Women Mentors and How to Establish an Academic Career in GI
- Do Women in GI Have the Same Opportunities in the East and West?
- Tips and Tricks for a Successful Career in GI: Pearls from an Expert

There were several important points:

1. Women are underrepresented in leadership roles in academic medicine. Women lag in promotion in academic medical centers with only a small percentage reaching full professor levels in the United

States and only 14-15 becoming department chairs in academic medicine in the United States.

2. Women are underrepresented in GI, probably around the world. There are relatively more in hepatology and the fewest are in therapeutic endoscopy.
3. In many studies, women are paid less than men for the same work.
4. Why are there fewer women than men in leadership in medicine? There is both a glass ceiling (this refers to an invisible barrier that prevents women from reaching higher levels) and a leaky pipeline (this refers to women leaving at all different stages in their careers. Factors contributing to the glass ceiling include institutional culture (which may not be as supportive of women), lack of support for work life integration, and bias, both conscious and unconscious. The leaky pipeline is due in part to lack of mentoring and lack of leadership training for women
5. Identifying these issues provides clear path for improvement, which will improve workforce both women and men. Reasons for this are multiple but include lack of mentoring and role models, lack of support for work life integration including quality on side daycare for those with small children, opportunities for part time work for both men and women, and unconscious bias.