



# WOMEN IN HEALTH

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## WOMEN IN HEALTH

The health sector has long been supported by the silent strength and tireless commitment of women. From hospitals to laboratories, clinics to global health organizations, women play an indispensable role in shaping the future of medicine, healing, and scientific innovation. Yet, despite their contributions, women in health are often underrepresented in leadership, under-recognized in research, and underpaid compared to male counterparts.

This article explores the critical role women play in healthcare and biomedical science, highlights their groundbreaking contributions, and calls for structural reforms to ensure equity, visibility, and opportunity for future generations.

### 1. A Historical Foundation of Care and Resistance

Throughout history, women have been the caregivers and community health stewards, often working without formal titles or institutional recognition. Figures like Florence Nightingale and Elizabeth Blackwell in the West, or Anandibai Joshi and Gerty Cori from the Global South and Eastern Europe, broke medical barriers despite extreme opposition. Women served as midwives, herbalists, and nurses before finally being admitted into medical schools or laboratories.

Yet these pioneering efforts were frequently overshadowed by male-dominated institutions. It wasn't until the 20th century that women began gaining wider access to professional medical and scientific education—though progress was slow and uneven across regions.

## 2. Women as Doctors: Rising Through the Ranks

Today, women make up a significant share of the global medical workforce. In many countries, women outnumber men in medical school enrollments. Fields such as pediatrics, obstetrics & gynecology, and family medicine have strong female representation.

However, significant disparities remain:

- Fewer women ascend to hospital directorships or academic leadership roles.
- Specialties such as surgery, cardiology, and orthopedics remain male-dominated.
- Gender-based discrimination and harassment continue to affect career progression.

Despite these challenges, women doctors are often at the frontline of primary care, especially in rural and underserved regions. Their holistic approach to patient care, focus on prevention, and empathetic communication have been consistently shown to improve health outcomes.

## 3. Women in Science: Breaking Barriers in the Lab

Women scientists have been responsible for some of the most important medical breakthroughs:

- Rosalind Franklin's contributions to the discovery of DNA's double-helix structure.
- Tu Youyou, the first Chinese woman to win the Nobel Prize in Medicine, for discovering artemisinin, a life-saving anti-malarial drug.
- Katalin Karikó, a pioneer of mRNA technology used in COVID-19 vaccines.

Despite this, female scientists still face challenges in securing research funding, leading large labs, and publishing in top-tier journals. According to UNESCO, less than 30% of the world's researchers are women.

This underrepresentation not only limits individual careers—it stifles scientific progress by excluding diverse perspectives critical to health innovation.

#### 4. Women in Global Health Leadership

Women play a central role in delivering global health, particularly through international organizations and NGOs. However, their visibility at the highest levels remains low. A 2021 WHO report noted that although 70% of the global health workforce is female, only 25% of health leadership positions are held by women.

This discrepancy has real consequences:

- Health policies may ignore gender-specific needs.

- Reproductive health, maternal care, and gender-based violence may be underprioritized.
- Career advancement for women in health fields can be limited by family care expectations and lack of mentorship.

To build a fairer, more responsive health system, it is critical to empower women not just as workers—but as decision-makers.

## 5. The COVID-19 Lens: Undeniable Leadership

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed both the fragility of global health systems and the resilience of women within them:

- Women made up the majority of frontline health workers—nurses, physicians, lab technicians, and caregivers.
- Several countries led by women (e.g., New Zealand, Finland, Taiwan) were praised for their effective pandemic responses.
- Female scientists played key roles in vaccine development, data analytics, and crisis response.

Yet, these contributions were often under-celebrated. The pandemic also saw a regression in gender equality, with increased domestic care burdens and reduced research outputs from women due to lockdowns and school closures.

## 6. Toward Equity: What Needs to Change

Achieving equity for women in health and science demands structural reforms across institutions:

### A. Leadership Development & Mentorship

- Women must be actively supported to rise into executive roles, such as hospital CEOs, deans of medical schools, or heads of research labs.
- Mentorship programs can help navigate workplace politics, funding cycles, and promotion hurdles.

### B. Policy & Workplace Reform

- Equal pay audits
- Parental leave for all genders
- Safe workplace policies and anti-harassment enforcement

### C. Investment in Women-Led Research

- Prioritize funding for studies led by women, especially in fields like reproductive health, mental health, and infectious disease.
- Encourage interdisciplinary work where women lead both scientific and social dimensions of health.

## 7. A New Generation: The Power of Education and Inspiration

Across the globe, girls and young women are increasingly aspiring to careers in medicine, biotechnology, and global health. Representation matters—when young girls see women in lab coats leading vaccine discoveries or performing heart surgery, they realize their ambitions are valid and achievable. Educational platforms, like Auradevi Foundation under Auranusa Jeeranont, are actively investing in training programs for girls in science and medicine—especially in underserved communities. These initiatives are not just about education—they're about unlocking national potential.

## 8. Conclusion: The Healing Power of Inclusion

Women are not newcomers to the health field—they are its foundation, its innovators, its frontline defenders. But inclusion is not just about numbers. It is about enabling women to lead, to decide, to innovate, and to transform systems from within.

The future of health is not only technological or policy-driven—it is human-centered, and women must be at its core.

## GENDER SHIFTS

### The Rise of Female Gynecologists and the Gender Shift in Medical Care

The medical profession has long been considered a male-dominated field. But in recent decades, a significant transformation has been taking place—especially in specialties like obstetrics and gynecology (OB-GYN). Today, more women are choosing careers in medicine, and in some areas of healthcare, particularly those that concern women's reproductive health, they are not only filling but also redefining the role. The rise of female gynecologists has

sparked important conversations about trust, empathy, patient comfort, and the future of medical care.

This article explores the increasing role of women in gynecology, the shifting preferences of patients, the subtle distinctions in how male and female doctors approach care, and how this evolution is shaping a more inclusive and effective healthcare landscape.

## The Surge of Women in Medicine

In many countries, women now make up the majority of medical students. This is a remarkable change from just a generation ago. In fields such as gynecology, this trend is even more pronounced. In the United States, over 80% of residents in OB-GYN programs are women. In many countries, female gynecologists are becoming the primary choice for patients seeking reproductive care.

The reasons for this shift are varied. First, the expansion of women's rights and access to higher education has opened doors that were once tightly shut. Secondly, many patients—particularly women—are increasingly expressing a preference to be examined and treated by someone of the same gender, especially for intimate or sensitive health issues. Medical institutions, recognizing this preference, are also actively recruiting more female specialists.

## Female Gynecologists: Comfort and Connection

Gynecology involves some of the most private aspects of a person's health—reproductive systems, menstrual issues,

sexual health, childbirth, and hormonal wellness. For many women, having a female doctor during these consultations and procedures provides a sense of ease and emotional safety that is difficult to replicate. Many patients feel that female doctors are more likely to understand what they are going through, both physically and emotionally. Shared gender experiences—such as menstruation, pregnancy, or menopause—can contribute to a deeper level of empathy and nonjudgmental understanding during consultations. In turn, this can foster better communication and more accurate diagnoses.

### Approach to Patient Care

Studies have shown that while both male and female doctors are equally skilled, their styles of patient interaction often differ in subtle but meaningful ways. Female doctors tend to spend more time with patients during consultations and emphasize listening. Their conversations often explore not just physical symptoms, but also emotional well-being and lifestyle factors.

Many patients report feeling more heard and supported by female gynecologists. This isn't to say that male doctors are less competent, but rather that their approach may be more direct and clinically focused, which may not always align with a patient's need for emotional reassurance or nuanced discussion—particularly in reproductive health matters.

### Persistent Challenges for Female Doctors

Despite the growing number of female physicians, women in medicine still face significant challenges. They are underrepresented in leadership positions in hospitals and

healthcare systems. Even when they perform the same duties as their male colleagues, they often earn less. Furthermore, balancing work and family life remains a serious hurdle in specialties like OB-GYN, which demand irregular hours and emergency availability.

Yet, even in the face of these obstacles, women continue to rise through the ranks of medical institutions. They are not just providing clinical care—they are leading groundbreaking research, influencing health policy, and reshaping what it means to be a doctor in the 21st century.

### The Evolving Role of Male Gynecologists

While the field of gynecology is becoming increasingly female-dominated, male gynecologists remain an important part of the profession. Many have long-standing relationships with patients and bring high levels of expertise, especially in sub-specialties like fertility or surgical gynecology. However, some men entering the field now face new challenges. There are cases where patients specifically request a female doctor, which can reduce opportunities for male practitioners. Some male doctors also report feeling hesitant or scrutinized during certain procedures, fearing misinterpretation or discomfort. These evolving dynamics are leading many male gynecologists to focus on areas of the field where patient gender preferences are less pronounced.

### A Global Perspective

In many parts of the world, especially in conservative societies, the preference for female OB-GYNs is not just cultural—it's critical. In places like South Asia, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, modesty norms and religious

beliefs often discourage women from receiving care from male doctors. In these regions, there is an urgent demand for more female health professionals.

Unfortunately, a shortage of trained female doctors in rural or underdeveloped areas continues to prevent many women from accessing necessary care. This points to the broader need for policies that invest in the education and training of women in medicine—especially in communities where female-led healthcare is essential.

## The Future of Women's Health

The increasing presence of women in gynecology is not just changing who provides care—it's changing how care is delivered. Female gynecologists are leading the charge in bringing attention to conditions that have historically been misunderstood or under-researched, such as endometriosis, postpartum depression, and hormonal disorders.

More importantly, they are advocating for a healthcare system that treats women not just as patients—but as people with voices, choices, and specific needs. The rise of female doctors is about more than numbers—it's about redefining medicine to be more inclusive, compassionate, and patient-centered.

## Conclusion

The growth of female representation in gynecology marks a critical evolution in healthcare. It reflects a deeper understanding that patient comfort, trust, and emotional intelligence are as vital to medical success as clinical knowledge. While both male and female doctors have much

to offer, the increasing visibility of women in this field is helping to balance long-standing gender disparities in medicine.

As the healthcare system continues to evolve, diversity among its providers will remain central to delivering high-quality, empathetic care. Women as gynecologists are not replacing men—they are complementing the profession with a broader perspective and a deeper connection to the needs of half the world's population.

## WOMEN AS SCIENTIST

### Women as Scientists: Breaking Barriers and Shaping the Future

For centuries, science has driven human progress—curing diseases, expanding our understanding of the universe, and improving everyday life. Yet for most of history, women were largely excluded from this journey. Whether due to cultural norms, legal restrictions, or lack of access to education, female participation in science was long stifled. That is changing. Today, women are increasingly taking their place at the forefront of scientific discovery, leading groundbreaking research, and reshaping what it means to be a scientist in the modern world.

This article explores the evolving role of women in science, celebrates their achievements, examines the challenges they continue to face, and highlights why their inclusion is vital for the future of global innovation.

### Historical Barriers and Modern Progress

Women like Marie Curie, Ada Lovelace, and Rosalind Franklin shattered early ceilings in science, but they were the exception, not the rule. In many countries, women were barred from attending universities or joining scientific institutions until the 20th century. Even when they contributed significantly to discoveries, their names were often erased from academic credit or Nobel Prize nominations.

Today, much has changed. Women are earning degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) at unprecedented rates. In fields such as biology, environmental science, and psychology, they often outnumber men. Yet, in areas like physics, engineering, and computer science, they remain underrepresented.

### Areas Where Women Excel

Women scientists have made remarkable progress in several domains. In medicine, female researchers have pioneered studies in reproductive health, vaccines, and autoimmune diseases. In environmental sciences, women are leading climate change research and sustainability efforts across the globe. In space exploration, women have served as astronauts, mission leaders, and planetary scientists—roles once closed to them.

Moreover, women have proven particularly effective in interdisciplinary fields, where empathy, communication, and complex systems thinking are critical—attributes often underappreciated in the traditional scientific hierarchy but increasingly vital in addressing real-world problems.

## Gender-Based Challenges

Despite progress, many challenges persist. Women in science still face wage gaps, limited mentorship opportunities, fewer promotions, and underrepresentation in leadership roles. Implicit bias often results in their research receiving less funding or fewer citations, even when the work is equally rigorous. Workplace culture can also be a barrier. Lab environments, research institutions, and universities have not always been welcoming to women, particularly those balancing family responsibilities or coming from underrepresented ethnic groups. Sexual harassment and systemic discrimination remain problems in many countries, discouraging some from pursuing or staying in scientific careers.

## Why Diversity in Science Matters

Science thrives on innovation—and innovation is fueled by diversity. When women participate in science, the range of questions asked broadens, and the methods of inquiry diversify. Women bring different life experiences, priorities, and problem-solving styles to the table, enriching the scientific process. For instance, women-led studies have been instrumental in identifying gender-specific symptoms in heart disease and medicine—leading to better diagnostics and treatment for both men and women. In climate science, female scientists often emphasize community-based solutions and social equity alongside technical models. Inclusion of women in science is not just about fairness—it's about making science better.

## Role Models and Rising Stars

Across the globe, women are leading major scientific initiatives. From Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer

Doudna, who co-developed CRISPR gene editing technology, to Thai marine biologists protecting coral reefs, to African epidemiologists driving public health research, women are transforming science at every level. These role models inspire the next generation of girls to pursue science—not as an exception, but as a norm. Programs that support STEM education for girls, mentorship opportunities, and equitable hiring practices are slowly beginning to change the pipeline.

## Global Efforts and Policies

Institutions, governments, and private sectors are increasingly recognizing the need for gender equity in science. UNESCO, the UN, and many national academies have launched initiatives to support women in research through grants, scholarships, and leadership training. Efforts to promote gender-neutral hiring, parental leave, and inclusive lab culture are making the scientific community more accessible. Many universities now require that research teams reflect gender diversity in order to receive funding. These changes, while still uneven, are steps in the right direction.

## The Future of Women in Science

The road ahead is both promising and challenging. Artificial intelligence, climate innovation, pandemic preparedness, and biotechnology are areas where the world urgently needs scientific talent—and where women are poised to lead. Ensuring their full participation is essential not only for gender justice but for human advancement as a whole. We are witnessing a new generation of women scientists who are not just participating in science, but redefining it—shifting

focus from purely technical outcomes to solutions that integrate ethics, social impact, and sustainability.

## Conclusion

Women in science are no longer silent contributors—they are visionary leaders. Yet, true equity will only be realized when systemic barriers are dismantled and all voices are valued equally in the pursuit of knowledge. As a society, investing in women scientists means investing in innovation, health, sustainability, and a future in which every human mind can contribute to solving humanity's greatest challenges. Science is stronger, more creative, and more compassionate when it reflects the diversity of the world it seeks to serve.