

## Editorial

# WINCARS: Looking to the Future, Working to Change the Past

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*“Any society that fails to harness the energy and creativity of its women is at a huge disadvantage in the modern world.”*

Tian Wei

Whilst there has been a significant expansion in the numbers of women admitted to medical school, often outnumbering men in many medical schools across the world, there is significant under-representation of women in academic medicine and senior leadership positions globally, particularly in the cardiovascular field. There are two recurring themes serving as barriers towards the advancement of women, the glass ceiling (referring to an invisible barrier to the advancement of women) and the leaky pipeline (the attrition of women faculty in the pathway towards more senior roles). Several factors have been described in contributing to the glass ceiling and leaky pipeline including discrimination, conscious and unconscious bias, lack of opportunities for career progression, lack of mentorship, unequal financial compensation, and unsupportive institutional cultures and policies. A large body of literature has shown that a more diverse and better gender-balanced workforce provides better care for patients. Our profession can only truly meet the needs of the population that it serves if the makeup of our profession reflects the population in which we practice. It is not a question of whether we should achieve gender equality in medicine but rather why are we still having to discuss it 170 years since Richard C. Cabot originally highlighted many of the barriers that women face in medicine and the need for gender equality.<sup>1</sup>

It is with this in mind that I wish to highlight the important role that the female fraternity at WINCARS (Women in Cardiovascular Diseases and Related Sciences) have in breaking down many of the traditional barriers that women face to achieve equality of opportunity and promotion in the cardiovascular workforce in India. I wish to congratulate WINCARS for its relentless efforts in highlight-

ing and working to remove many of the factors that have served as barriers to the advancement of outstanding women faculty and for providing the role models for young Indian female clinicians and scientists both within India and abroad to aspire to.

WINCARS has worked tirelessly forming partnerships between physicians, basic scientists, and allied health professionals to advance healthcare amongst women. During the COVID-19 pandemic, WINCARS's multidisciplinary clinicians and advisors jointly released the special issue titled “Scientific statement on working guidelines and recommendations for female population in COVID era by WINCARS,” which was endorsed by eminent national and international academic bodies (API, PHFI, CSI, and WAO). The organization presently has representation in all national cardiology scientific programs and has distinguished international speakers participating in most of its meetings. The organization also serves to highlight excellence amongst its members through their grant programs, including the “Prajwalika Scholarship Program (PSS),” “Surveir Research Award,” and “The Best Cardiology Case Award” to promote young researchers with outstanding papers.

Finally, through the Indian Journal of Cardiovascular Diseases in Women (IJCDW), WINCARS has provided a forum through which disparities in women's cardiovascular health can be highlighted and provided a platform to shine a light on the world class contribution of Indian women in medicine.

It is therefore my privilege to write this editorial for IJCDW, an official publication of WINCARS. IJCDW is amongst the few journals that promotes and addresses the healthcare issues of women, in particular cardiovascular diseases (CVD) among all age groups. In some of the world's most populous nations including India, the prevalence of CVD among women has increased and disparities between men and women in cardiovascular outcomes have widened. The journal aims to raise awareness and fill the knowledge gaps for this important health issue among women.

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IJCDW is one of the fastest growing and leading journals of India that endeavors to engage female academicians from across the country to showcase their work and highlight their contribution to academic medicine on a global stage. The journal is recognized by DOAJ, Embase, EBSCO, and ProQuest and has consistently met the production deadlines since its inception in 2014 with its quarterly series per year. The journal highlights are original research articles, review articles, interesting case reports, editorials, interventional round, practice in medicine, student's corner, and additional special issues as per the latest health trends. All recent articles attest to tremendous advances made in the understanding of wider clinical areas such as genetic and molecular basis of heart diseases, metabolic complexities, and difficult coronary interventions.

I hope that IJCDW will continue to grow as an educational and scientific resource achieving the highest international standards, but more importantly serve to highlight the impor-

tant role that women physician leaders have in narrowing sex disparities in the provision of cardiovascular care both in India and on a global stage. There is still a long way to go in overcoming many of the glass ceilings and leaky pipelines in which we lose much of the talent in our profession to barriers based on sex, but I am hopeful that WINCARS and IJCDW will serve as a means to remove these barriers for our future generation of physicians. It is only when we no longer lose talent in our profession just because it wears a skirt, that the healthcare we provide will grow to become truly world-class.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

None declared.

#### **Reference**

- 1 Cabot RC. Women in Medicine. *Boston Med Surg J* 1849;40(03): 1-4