

UCSF

UC San Francisco Previously Published Works

Title

Impact of COVID-19 on Medical School Faculty.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0m57595q>

Journal

Academic psychiatry : the journal of the American Association of Directors of Psychiatric Residency Training and the Association for Academic Psychiatry, 46(6)

ISSN

1042-9670

Authors

Binder, Renee
Garcia, Paul
Friedli, Amy
[et al.](#)

Publication Date

2022-12-01

DOI

10.1007/s40596-022-01630-3

Peer reviewed



Impact of COVID-19 on Medical School Faculty

Renee Binder¹ · Paul Garcia¹ · Amy Friedli¹ · Elena Fuentes-Afflick¹

Received: 4 February 2022 / Accepted: 21 March 2022

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to American Association of Chairs of Departments of Psychiatry, American Association of Directors of Psychiatric Residency Training, Association for Academic Psychiatry and Association of Directors of Medical Student Education in Psychiatry 2022

To the Editor:

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been widespread concern about potential reduced academic productivity and a negative impact on the careers of women in academia. There are reports of a temporal reduction in published papers and fewer first authorships for female academics, as compared to the previous year [1–4]. We describe the qualitative impact of COVID-19 on medical school faculty members at a large, research-intensive university.

In the fall of 2020, the university revised its academic review process to allow faculty members to add a narrative statement on the impact of COVID-19. The instructions were open-ended: faculty could choose to discuss negative impacts of the pandemic on their academic accomplishments or report additional accomplishments, including clinical or scholarly/creative contributions. For faculty who chose to include a statement, the information was available to all reviewers, thereby enabling them to evaluate the faculty member's accomplishments in light of the unique challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. To assess the impact of the pandemic from the perspective of the faculty, we reviewed all COVID-19 statements and categorized the impact as personal or professional and negative or positive. The IRB reviewed our project and determined it did not require further IRB oversight.

During the 2021–2022 academic cycle, 54 faculty members submitted COVID-19 statements. Nearly three-quarters of faculty ($N=39$) who added a COVID statement were women (39/54), which is substantially higher than the overall proportion of female faculty (49%). Half of faculty who submitted a statement were White ($N=27$), 36% were Asian ($N=19$),

13% were Hispanic/Latinx ($N=7$), and 2% were Black/African American ($N=1$). The ethnic distribution of faculty who submitted a COVID-19 statement was roughly similar to all faculty, with the exception of Latino faculty, who represent 6% of all faculty and 13% of those who submitted a COVID-19 statement. The narrative statements described both personal and professional impacts of the pandemic. We classified reported impacts as negative, positive, or both, so the numbers of negative and positive impacts exceed 100%.

Overall, two-thirds of the COVID-19 statements reported negative impacts which were personal, professional, or both. There was no gender-based difference in the statements which reported negative impacts ($p=0.75$; Fisher exact test). The negative personal impacts attributed to the pandemic included the impact of home schooling, loss of childcare, personal or family illness, and caring for elderly parents. Negative professional impact was also reported, such as lab closure, disrupted communication with collaborators and research subjects, and inability to travel for data collection. Faculty members described a negative impact on scholarly productivity through canceled scientific meetings, longer review time for journals, and lack of time to prepare grants.

Two-thirds of the faculty members who chose to submit a COVID-19 statement (29 women and 7 men) reported positive impacts related to the pandemic. These positive impacts included new leadership roles, novel research opportunities, achievements related to re-organization of clinical services or teaching programs, and the opportunity to serve communities that were highly impacted by COVID-19. While the proportion of women who added a narrative statement and reported positive impacts (74%) was higher than the proportion of men (47%), the difference was not statistically significant ($p=0.10$; Fisher exact test), given our limited sample.

In summary, in a medical school at a large, research-intense university, female faculty were more likely to add a statement describing the impact of COVID-19 to their academic dossier than male faculty and were more likely to report positive professional accomplishments. We are concerned about the potential for inequities in academic advancement, given the

✉ Renee Binder
renee.binder@ucsf.edu

¹ Office of Academic Affairs, University of California San Francisco School of Medicine, San Francisco, CA, USA

long-term nature of the pandemic, but we were unable to test for ethnic-based differences. The narrative statements provided contextual information that complimented the standard academic dossier and all of the faculty members who included a COVID-19 statement successfully underwent academic advancement. Despite widespread concern about negative impacts of the pandemic on academic productivity and career development for women, two-thirds of our faculty reported new opportunities and positive accomplishments during the early phase of the pandemic. Ongoing monitoring is needed to assess the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic productivity and identify gender- or ethnic-based differences in academic advancement.

Declarations

Disclosures On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

References

1. Gabster BP, Daalen K, Dhatt R, Barry M. Challenges for the female academic during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Lancet*. 2020;395:1968–70.
2. Andersen JP, Nielsen MW, Simone NL, Lewiss R, Jagsi R. Meta-research: COVID-19 medical papers have fewer women first authors than expected. *elife*. 2020;9:e58807.
3. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (2021) The impact of COVID-19 on the careers of women in academic sciences, engineering, and medicine. Washington DC. The National Academic Press. Available from <https://doi.org/10.17226/26061>
4. Malisch JL, Harris BN, Sherrer SM, Lewis KA, Shepherd SL, McCarthy PC, Spott JL, Karam EP, Moustard-Moussa N, Calarco JM, Ramalingam L. In the wake of COVID-19, academia needs new solutions to ensure gender equity. *Proc Natl Acad Sci*. 2020;117:15378–81.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.