

**Debate**

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE TEACHING-RESEARCH OF ANATOMY IN MEDICINE:  
THE GENDER ISSUE

## HOW TO BE A WOMAN-ANATOMIST IN UKRAINE

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Anatomy is a fundamental discipline that is the basis for all clinical specialties. Teaching Anatomy is a creative process that includes theoretical self-training of the lecturer, learning to prepare and demonstrate anatomical formations on preparations and on a corpse, creating tasks based on real clinical situations. The purpose of Clinical Anatomy is to find out in detail the topography of individual anatomical areas, to identify the most convenient operative approaches to anatomical formations, as well as to master the skills of dissection of tissues, their connection with the help of sutures, and practice of operative techniques. Of course, the lecturer of the Department of Anatomy and Clinical Anatomy must possess these skills to the full extent. Therefore, the absolute majority of collaborators (98.3%) of these departments in Ukraine have diplomas of higher medical education. Even greater requirements are placed on the Clinical Anatomy lecturer regarding the ability to perform the necessary volume of surgical interventions, therefore the majority of them (71.2%) have a specialization in one of the surgical specialties.

It is probably very difficult to make a detailed analysis of the staff of anatomy and clinical anatomy lecturers in a country that has experienced military aggression, where hostilities are taking place, people are dying every day, homes, hospitals, and educational institutions are being destroyed; in a country where more than 10 million citizens were forced to leave their places of residence, work and, in the best case, moved to a distance form of study/work, but I will try.

I am the head of the Department of Human Anatomy at the Odessa National Medical University (Odessa, Ukraine) from 2006 to 2019, and in 2019 I merged three departments: Human Anatomy, Pathological Anatomy, Topographic Anatomy and Operative Surgery and headed the established department of Normal and Pathological Clinical Anatomy, where I still work.

It should be noted that Ukraine currently has 17 higher educational institutions with a medical orientation, or a medical institute where future doctors are trained and there is a department of Anatomy and/or department of Clinical Anatomy. Also, several universities of the general type have medical faculties that train doctors, but they do not have separate departments of Anatomy or Clinical Anatomy, but instead there are departments of a medical and biological profile, which, among other things, teach Anatomy. Based on the above, my calculations did not include data from those consolidated departments of these universities.

At of the beginning of 2023, the departments of Anatomy and the departments of Clinical Anatomy (in some universities the name "Topographic Anatomy and Operative Surgery" is also used) were preserved in 7 universities. Only one department of Clinical Anatomy (14.3%) is headed by a woman, the departments of

Anatomy in these universities are run by two women (28.6%). As for universities with departments of Anatomy/Clinical Anatomy, the situation here is completely different: 70 % of their heads are women.

If we observe the gender composition of lecturers, the part of women in the departments of Clinical Anatomy is 46.2 %, in the departments of Anatomy - 52.1%, in the Departments of Anatomy/Clinical Anatomy - 66.7%.

Before we make any conclusions, it is necessary to cite some data taken from open sources: the share of women with higher education and a scientific degree in the total number of all employed in Ukraine is 30.4%; in 2018, among the lecturers who defended theses for the scientific degree of Medical Sciences Candidate (Ukrainian analogue of PhD, first grade of scientific degree) were 66.1% women, for the scientific degree of Medical Sciences Doctor (the highest scientific degree in Ukraine) – 42.3%.

The proportion of girls who entered the Medical faculty of Odesa National Medical University in 2022 is 70.7%, the Dental faculty is 64.2%. Among the Anatomy/Clinical Anatomy lecturers at the university where I work, the proportion of women is 57.1%. But in the history of our university, from the beginning of its foundation in 1900, there wasn't a single woman among the heads of the Department of Anatomy or Clinical Anatomy/Topographic Anatomy and Operative Surgery until 2006.

Since 2019, I am the First Vice-President of the Scientific Society of Anatomists, Histologists, Embryologists and Topographers of Ukraine (NT AHET). It so happened that a year ago we lost the President of NT AHET, so for the second year I am performing the duties of the President. The Secretary of NT AHET is also a woman, among the members of the Presidium and the Board there are almost equal numbers of women and men.

Among the academicians of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (NASU), there are only 8 women - 4.7%, the President of NASU is a man. In the National Academy of Medical Sciences of Ukraine (NAMNU) there is a similar trend - among 46 academicians there are 4 women (8.7%), the President is a man. Therefore, it is not surprising that only 20% of the positions of Directors of research institutions subordinated to NAMNU are held by women.

For the sake of clarity, let's also look at the state of gender equality in obtaining the highest positions in medical universities and in the leadership of some ministries that are directly related to the management of educational institutions. Yes, there are only 3 women (17.6%) in the position of University Rector (among the universities that we discuss in this article),

currently in the Ministry of Health of Ukraine the position of Minister is held by a man, Heads of Directorates and Heads of Departments in 60% of cases –men, although among other employees – not on the superior positions, the vast majority (74%) are women. In the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the situation is even more interesting: among the deputy Ministers, only 25% are women, the Minister is a man, and, for example, among the employees of the Directorate of Pre-Higher and Higher Education, the proportion of women is 64%, but only 25% Heads of the departments of the same Directorate are females. There is nothing surprising, even in the plans for the next 10 years, which were laid out in the "Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine in 2021-2031" There is not a single word about creating equal conditions for obtaining higher education or for the work of women in higher education institutions. By the way, in the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the proportion of women in Ministers positions is only 22.7%, and, in fact, the Prime Minister is a man.

It is possible to make certain conclusions regarding the equality of opportunities for women and men in higher medical education in Ukraine, based on the above data:

- First, women have the same opportunity to study in higher education institutions to obtain a medical education as men.

- Second, they can pursue graduate studies and research to obtain a PhD degree at the same level as men.

- Third, far fewer women than men are able to continue research after obtaining a PhD degree (Candidate), or not all women complete this research by defending a dissertation for a Doctor's degree.

- Fourth, both in the separate departments of Anatomy and Clinical Anatomy, and in the combined Departments of Anatomy/Clinical Anatomy, the number of women and men among lecturers is almost the same, or the proportion of women is even greater than men.

- Fifth, only one woman managed to become the Head of the Department of Clinical Anatomy, two women – of the Departments of Anatomy in the same universities (among 7 departments), when among the Heads of the combined Departments of Anatomy/Clinical Anatomy more than 2/3 are women. Probably, this situation depends to some extent on the policy of the university management, as well as due to the fact that Surgery is traditionally considered a more "male" specialty. But in cases where it is necessary to unite a large number of specialists, although related, but of different specialties, and to create a large amount of educational and methodical documentation for

several disciplines taught at the united departments, women come to the fore, who are characterized by better ability to painstaking, sometimes boring work, who can find psychological approaches to any employees, can perform creative, technical and organizational work with equal quality.

- Sixth, the position of the Head of the department is most often the highest step in the career "ladder" of an employee of a medical university. The example of the Ministry of Health and the number of female rectors of medical universities can prove this. But reaching the highest position in the leadership of the country is an almost unreal task for a woman.

Usually, when any problem appears, two main questions arise: "Who is to blame?" and "What to do?". The first question can be answered only in terms of the mentality, traditions, and historical practice of the country. Ukraine is characterized by a certain difference in the perception of the role of women in the city and in the countryside. If in cities women have many opportunities for work, for the organization of kindergartens, schools and extracurricular facilities for children, more comfortable living conditions, and this makes women independent from men, neither materially nor physically, then in the villages there are still many open questions, which are very difficult for women to solve on their own - maintenance of the building (repair, lack of communications, etc.), preparation for the winter period for animals (rooms, fodder, insoles), long distance to infrastructure facilities, sometimes - lack of good roads, and of course, there are much fewer offers for permanent work that provides stable income. Usually, universities are located in cities (and not small ones!), so we take the conditions for urban women as a basis. Yes, they can take the child to kindergarten/school and work quietly, but if the child is small and sick, most often the mother stays at home with him. The salary of a non-experienced lecturer is low, so many lecturers try to take more teaching load to get more, so there is no time left for research. There is no motivation to involve women in serious scientific work. If a woman still managed to "make a career", then we note that working in a managerial position requires constant readiness for any challenges related to both the "human factor" and the solution of organizational issues of varying degrees of complexity. This is time and energy that will be stolen from family,

friends, own hobbies, care for self-development and self-improvement. Not every family can withstand the test of life with a mother-in-chief. By the way, when men get an administrative position, they more willingly attract men to their team, because everything seems more understandable and familiar to them.

What shall we do? One thing has always helped me personally - to work. It is necessary to work on every issue that prevents women from revealing their potential, that restrains the urge to improve, that requires too much effort. But at the same time, it is very important to change the state policy in relation to women, because without financial and organizational support of women scientists, women teachers, there will be no breakthrough in solving the problems of "gender stereotypes".

Finally, I want to wish all women who are just starting their path in medical education, inspiration and perseverance. As famous Ukrainian poets said: "Peel this rock! Let there be neither heat nor cold. Don't stop you! Endure labor, thirst, and hunger. Because you are destined to break the rock with a session!" ("Stoneworkers", Ivan Franko), and "Fight - win! God help you!" ("Caucasus", Taras Shevchenko). From ancient time, women guarded the home, family, supported and helped their husbands. Probably, it's time for men to support and help their women!

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