

POLICY STATEMENT ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The Association of Women Surgeons advocates for zero tolerance of sexual harassment, which represents the extreme end of the spectrum of gender discrimination. It is defined as verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment. Sexual harassment can result in stress, loss of confidence and loss of productivity for individuals but also has system effects on the workplace that may include demoralization, increased turn over, and decreased productivity. Research on sexual harassment in surgery has found that 20-60% of women medical students, residents, and faculty, have experienced sexual harassment over the course of their professional careers. Up to 15% of men have reported experiencing sexual harassment. Behaviors that constitute sexual harassment include inappropriate comments of a sexual nature, unwanted sexual advances or physical contact of a sexual nature, and quid pro quo where sex is posited explicitly or implicitly as a condition affecting employment or academic status.

The American Medical Association notes that consensual sexual relationships between trainees and their supervisors also raise concerns because of the inherent inequity in status and power between the individuals. If these relationships occur or develop, they should be disclosed and the supervisory role eliminated.

The mission of the Association of Women Surgeons is to inspire, encourage and enable women surgeons to realize their professional and personal goals. We are committed to fostering an environment for the practice of surgery which is supportive, fair, and in which all individuals are treated with respect and tolerance. Sexual harassment must not be tolerated within the surgical community.

References:

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