

P5638

### The gender issues and radiation risk in Italian cath lab: insights from a national survey

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**Background:** Females are continuously growing in interventional communities, but some unmet needs exist on the issue of gender's differences.

**Purposes:** To investigate gender's differences on job-habits and private-life in Italian Cath-Labs. Further, the topic of temporary abstention from the interventional activity for any cause (pregnancy, illness, injury) and radio-protection issues were also assessed.

**Methods:** A national survey supported by Italian Interventional Cardiology Society (GISE) was submitted by mail to overall 1,230 GISE-members. Questions were formulated in multiple-choice and some required an open answer or a scale definition. Categorical data are presented as numbers and percentages and compared using chi-square test. P-values <0.05 were considered significant.

**Results:** Responders were 326 (26.5%). Sixty-six (20.2%) were young (<35-years), and 29.6% were aged between 41–50 years. Among these, 211 (65.9%) were expert operators with more than 10-years of Cath-Lab experience. Notably 86 (26.4%) of responders were females. There were more females aged <40-years as compared with males (50 vs. 34%, p=0.010). No differences were observed according to the job-position (consultants-females 72.1% vs males 78.3%, p=0.15), as well as workload (females performing "on call" 69.8% vs. males 68.3%, p=0.12). However, as compared with males, females were more frequently single (22.1% vs. 8.7%, p=0.02), childless (58.1% vs 26.7%, p<0.001). In addition, males

had more frequently a partner working in the hospital-staff as compared to females (56% vs 44.8%, p<0.001). In case of abstention from Cath-Lab, 39.7% and 70.9% of the population believe that, it is useful to perform PCI-robotics simulations, and to participate in "Refresh-skill"-sessions, respectively. Indeed, 53.3% of responders argue that pregnancy/breastfeeding negatively affect professional skill and job-career. Even it allowed, 71.9% suggest abstention from Cath-Lab during pregnancy. Notably, only 50% declare to be aware of the laws that regulate access to the Cath-Lab during pregnancy and only 23% of females report to have received detailed information regarding the radio-exposition during the first trimester of pregnancy and breastfeeding. The 80% of responders retains the current radioprotection counseling programs not enough specific for age and gender and more than 80% agree there are not campaigns designed and promoted to prevent infertility. Finally, more than 60% of responders reported to have had any type of job-discriminations.

**Conclusions:** The number of Young-females' Italian interventional cardiologists is increasing. According to this National survey there are not gender disparities in the working. Conversely several important differences exist in the private-life. There is the need of developing strategies for education, professional advancement in cases of Cath-Lab abstention as well as of sex-specific radio-exposure programs in the field of interventional cardiology.