

ICU Admittance: Does Gender Matter?



Using a survey, with eight cases differing only in regard to the gender of the patient, researchers in Sweden have demonstrated an absence of a gender bias related to ICU admission in Swedish hospitals. Survey results show that female physicians were more likely to admit patients than their male colleagues, regardless of the gender of the patient. The results are published in *Scandinavian Journal of Trauma, Resuscitation and Emergency Medicine*.

Admission to an intensive care unit (ICU) should be based on the patient's illness severity. Patient attributes such as religion, nationality, socioeconomic class or gender are not relevant in this setting. One study from Austria showed that men more than women were admitted to ICU even when illness severity was greater in women. In a previous study from Sweden, 60 percent of all ICU care was spent on men but they did have a higher severity of illness compared to women.

In the present study, physicians working in anaesthesiology/intensive care as well as non-ICU-colleagues were included as the aim was to test a possible gender bias for ICU-admittance. Emma Larsson, MD, PhD, of the Department of Anaesthesia, Surgical Services and Intensive Care at Karolinska University Hospital Solna, Stockholm, and colleagues created two different versions of an online survey, with eight patient cases, which were sent to physicians in Sweden who within their field of speciality meet patients that could be eligible for intensive care.

See Also: [Sex in the ICU: Eliminating Gender-Based Disparities in Care](#)

The versions of the survey were identical except that the patient gender in each case was exchanged between the two surveys. Depending on the respondent's birthday (odd or even number), they were directed to one of the two surveys. At the end of each case the respondent was asked to answer if they thought that the patient needed ICU care, yes or no. The respondents were not told in advance about the design of the survey. The respondents were also asked to state their age, sex, field of speciality, size of hospital and title.

Of 1,426 respondents, 679 and 747 answered survey 1 and 2, respectively (overall response rate of 30 percent). Based on the results, there were no significant differences in willingness to admit in between cases describing a man or woman in the physician responses. However, anaesthesiologists and intensivists were significantly more willing to admit patients to the ICU as compared to all other specialities.

See Also: [End of Emancipation: Unravelling the Effect of Gender on ICU Mortality](#)

The survey also found that female physicians were more willing to admit patients overall, regardless of gender. "This is somewhat in line with other investigations, where female doctors have been found to adhere more to treatment guidelines, and also to spend more time in consultation with female and male patients alike," the authors note.

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