

Women in Medicine Night

On March 1, 2007 students and faculty of Dalhousie University held the medical school's first "Women in Medicine" night. With the new class of 2010 being composed of greater than 50% females, students were interested in learning how practicing female physicians felt about being women in medicine. The objective of the event was to create an informal evening during which students could have the opportunity to hear from, and ask questions of, practicing physicians in various areas of medicine about what it is like to be a female in the medical community. The main goals of the evening itself were to foster the building of connections between these physicians and the students and for students to attain advice about balancing both their lifestyle and career.

The organizing committee sent out a request to all four medical classes for students to make suggestions about female physicians they felt have been role models for themselves and other students. The response and enthusiasm was tremendous. The final panel included specialists from family medicine, orthopedic surgery, neurosurgery, pathology, and otolaryngology. The physicians were of diverse ages, backgrounds, and lifestyle choices. The Dalhousie Medical Alumni Association graciously offered to mount a window display in the Foyer of the Tupper Building on campus to help promote the event and to illustrate the history of women in medicine.

To keep the evening informal it was held in the medical students' lounge and coffee, tea and desserts were offered. The panelists were asked to introduce themselves and discuss why they chose medicine and their specialty as well as how they balance their career with personal life. Some of the major themes that came through included the importance of maintaining outside interests and activities as well as making time for relationships and family. The responses were quite varied but had a common thread that all the women felt it was important to find what works for you and to do what will make you happy. It was stressed that making yourself available to friends and family, participating in sports or other activities outside of medicine, and finding activities you can share with the important people in your life can help

balance the demands in this field of work. All of the women agreed that finding a positive mentor early in one's career is very important and students should not be afraid to seek out advice or ask someone to act as their mentor.

The evening was well received and enjoyed by the students and faculty members in attendance. Individuals were able to build connections, learn from others' experiences, and get answers to some of their questions about what life as a woman in the medical field is like. The hope is that this evening will become an annual event that students and faculty will continue to gain from and that it will foster positive feelings surrounding students becoming women in medicine.

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