Medical Relationships: Dual Physician Households

Valentina Stevanovich Lassalle, DO
According to an American Medical Association Insurance Agency Inc. survey of nearly 5,000 doctors, 40% of physicians are likely marry another physician or health professional.

There was also noted to be a 23% percent odds increase in burnout in physicians having a spouse or partner who works as a non-physician healthcare professional.

Divorce among physicians is less common (7.7%) than among non-healthcare workers (17.2) and several health professions.

Female physicians have a substantially higher prevalence of divorce than male physicians, which may be partly attributable to a differential effect of hours worked on divorce (BMJ 2015;350:h706).

In 2018, 1165 couples (2330 applicants) participated in the program and 1082 pairs (95.8%) matched.
Perceived Benefits

- Older age at the time of marriage
- Higher education levels
- Socioeconomic status of both individuals
- Value that physician couples place on companionship
- Increased time together in the workplace
- Shared experience
- Dual income
Perceived Challenges

- Applicants are not at a disadvantage compared with others however may receive a less desirable program
- Staggered training if pursuing fellowship
- Finding reliable child care accommodating two busy schedules
- Work-life balance difficulties
- Being “too” similar
- Disproportionate income taxing
Women

- 2017 was the first year females exceeded males as first-year medical students.
- 50.9% of medical school applicants in 2018 were female (JAMA. 2019;321(22):2161-2162).
- Among early career physician-scientist recipients of National Institutes of Health awards from 2006-2009, women with children spent substantially more time on domestic activities than their male counterparts and were more likely to take time off for childcare responsibilities (Ann Intern Med. 2014;160:344-353).
- A national study of nearly 9,900 dual-physician couples from 2000 to 2015 in the United States found that female physicians with children contributed substantially fewer hours at work than male physicians (JAMA Intern Med. 2017;177(10):1524-1525).


