

EACVI Task Force for Women in CVI Newsletter – October 2024 Issue

Special Edition: Celebrating Women in Medicine

September was the month that we celebrated women in medicine in every profession: doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and so many more, we are all becoming one. Little progress has been made in gender equity in medicine and in the money spent on cardiovascular health in women. Being a woman in medicine is not easy – we work very hard, a very important percentage of our life, and the extra work we do is on a voluntary basis; we still see inequalities in our profession and still face gender or motherhood discrimination. We hear you, we feel you. And we are here to discuss this with you.

The Task Force of Women in Cardiovascular Imaging has a dual role: to study cardiovascular health in women and to motivate/encourage women in cardiovascular medicine. We have made great progress in raising awareness of gender differences, but we still have a lot of work to do to encourage women in cardiovascular medicine.

In this short newsletter, we asked Task Force members to describe what or who inspires them in medicine.

Starting from myself, **Dr Julia Grapsa**. My very first mentor, Professor Anagnostopoulos, inspired me to follow cardiology. A renowned cardiac surgeon who is now 84 years old, he is my inspiration on a daily basis – I get his advice for every obstacle I face. And of course, my father who navigated life with ethos, dignity and transparency and was a great advocate for his students.

Our deputy editor, **Prof Ana Almeida**, explains: Since I was a very young child, I was always playing the doctor role with other children, maybe because I felt a sense of responsibility and a need to do something for people's health and wellbeing. Later, although successful in areas such as mathematics and physics as well as music, I chose to follow medicine without a doubt. My first motivation was to research to know better all the mysteries of the human body, namely biology and genetics. Marie Curie was a model for me, in her dedication without limits to research leading to the discoveries on radioactivity in parallel to her dedication to humanity support, both roles admirably defining a doctor. Rosalind Franklin was also a model for me, a notable scientist woman who pioneered the discovery of the DNA double helix, opening Watson and Crick's Nobel Prize. This discovery and its application on the human body, was for me a fascinating trigger for my interest in medicine. Later, from early times as a doctor, several successful, knowledgeable and courageous women, both physicians and scientists, have played significant and inspiring roles on my life as a clinician, teacher and researcher.

Editor in chief for European Heart Journal Imaging Methods and Practice, **Dr Alessia Gimelli** wrote "From the time I was six years old, I told my family that I would become a doctor, though at that young age, I couldn't fully explain why. Looking back, it was perhaps my curiosity about how the human body worked that fascinated me the most. I was captivated by the idea of the body as a perfect machine, and this curiosity naturally led me to an inclination towards research. For me, research has always gone hand in hand with my desire to practice medicine, as both are driven by the need to understand, discover, and improve patient care.

In addition to this, I've always been drawn to the urgency of emergency medicine, where decisions must be made swiftly yet thoughtfully. The ability to condense knowledge and apply it in critical moments has always inspired me, as it merges scientific understanding with the immediacy of saving lives.

I believe that medicine can only be practiced well if one remains humble. Humility allows you to maintain the critical mindset of someone who doesn't assume they know everything, but instead analyzes each situation with the goal of truly understanding it. Continuous learning, critical thinking, and empathy are the qualities that, together, enable a doctor to help patients effectively and become a truly good physician".

Dr Anne Bernard, Head of the EchoLab, Tours University Hospital, Board member of the Société Française de Cardiology (SFC), President-elect of the Filiale d'Imagerie Cardiovasculaire (SFC), member of the European Association of Cardiovascular Imaging Women Task Force was inspired by legendary Marie-Curie: "She is a pioneering woman in science and the determination she showed in discovery is a strong motivation. She not only made groundbreaking discoveries in radioactivity but also dedicated herself to treating the wounded during World War I by developing mobile X-ray units. Her commitment to both science and humanity deeply inspired me to follow in her footsteps".

And **Dr Sara Moscatelli** MD, MSc, PhD candidate, HIT and Web & communication committee member wrote "The idea of becoming a doctor was always distant from me during my adolescence. I thought I would follow my family's tradition in the field of business, but when it came time to decide, I was incredibly undecided because I was interested in so many things. However, something unexpected happened one winter evening. I was out with a few friends, enjoying the night and playing games. I was talking with one of my best friends when another friend approached us with a sorrowful expression, and behind him, another friend was crying. I was taken aback and asked, 'What happened?'

He looked at me and said, 'You don't know? Elena and Francesco died in a car accident tonight. The road was icy, their car lost control, and another vehicle collided with them.' I was 17, and that was the first time I truly felt the impact of death. I had always known it existed, but it had never been so close to me.

Losing two close friends made me reflect deeply on what I wanted to do with my life. The more I thought about it, the less appealing the idea of making money became. I began to realize that I wanted to dedicate my life to something meaningful, something that could bring good into the world. This is how I found my path toward medicine and clinical research.

I will always miss them, and their loss profoundly changed my life"

As a take home message out of this celebration, you need to remember that you are surrounded by people who support and appreciate you – whether this is your family, your work colleagues, your friends, don't lose your passion for medicine. Stand by your values, support other women and lead by example. As Maya Angelou wrote "**Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women**".

Dr Julia Grapsa

Chair of the [EACVI Task Force - Women in Cardiovascular Imaging](#)