

# A Qualitative Exploration of the Career-Choice Journey of Women in Anesthesiology

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Women comprise **50%** of medical student graduates but only **41%** in the perioperative arena. Anesthesiology is more inclusive than other specialties, but recruitment remains stagnant.

## So what influences women to choose to specialize in anesthesiology?

1

### Specialty Characteristics



Anesthesiology offers clinical variety and various opportunities once residency is completed. Other notable traits include urgent clinical management, ability to "do it all", and the privilege to care for the most vulnerable patients.

2

### Gender Awareness



Conscious and subconscious gender affinities may impact accessibility of mentors and role models, especially in an exclusive OR culture that often perpetuates preferential treatment towards men.

3

### Pathway Support



Shadowing opportunities are often self-initiated since anesthesiology is rarely a required course in medical school. Faculty mentors play a significant role in pursuit, but peer mentoring among residents provides targeted support and the ability to see one's future self.

4

### Learning Environment



Anesthesiology departments create an extraordinary welcoming culture and supportive, learner-focused environments. Study participants describe being challenged to ask questions and seek answers, but feel safe in not always knowing the answer.

5

### Hidden Curriculum



The ability to see women leaders in anesthesiology molds perceptions of the specialty and residency training programs. The hidden curriculum of "who is valued and included" was recognized, with calls for change in the specialty and academic medicine.

6

### Mystery Behind the Drapes



Often misunderstood by those outside the field, study participants felt they were "in on the secret". The specialty highlights humility, collaboration, and management of interdisciplinary team dynamics in the OR and ICU settings.

This study, which consisted of semistructured interviews of women anesthesiology residents and medical students committed to anesthesiology, revealed novel themes not previously described in literature.

***Sharing stories and voices of women in anesthesiology is vital to recognizing their valuable journey in the specialty.***