

# The ascent of females in Canadian urology: Times they are a-changin'

Ashley Cox<sup>1</sup>, Marie-Paule Jammal<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Urology, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, Canada; <sup>2</sup>Cité de la Santé de Laval, Laval, QC, Canada

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**D**r. Christina Ethel Hill became the first woman in Canada to specialize in urology, achieving her FRCSC in 1976.<sup>1</sup>

Over the last 50 years, the ascent of female urologists in Canada has been steady, with some acceleration in the past two decades. This year, we are exceptionally proud to celebrate that the Canadian Urological Association (CUA) will have its first female president.

We have witnessed significant changes in the gender landscape of Canadian urology. In 2022, the percentage of retired women urologists was 1%, with only 13% of practicing urologists being female; however, as of 2025, 36% of the resident body identifies as female, and almost 2% as non-binary. We are beginning to see the gender landscape of Canadian urologists reflect our patient population. This acceptance of gender diversity has followed the increasing number of women accepted to medical school and applying to urology.<sup>2</sup>

Canadian studies show that 96.6% of female urologists in Canada are 'very to somewhat satisfied' with their careers, with 54.2% being 'very satisfied'.<sup>3</sup> We are seeing more female urologists in academic centers and across all urologic subspecialties, including transplant and uro-oncology. There are more female program directors in Canada, and increasing female leadership within both the Quebec Urological Association and the Canadian Urological Association.<sup>4</sup> The Canadian Society for Women in Urology (CSWU) is now an official affiliate of the CUA, and is actively working to address barriers faced by female urologists and trainees.

Unfortunately, female urologists continue to face persistent challenges, including managing traditional societal perceptions. In surgery, women are often

expected to be motherly caregivers, making patients less tolerant of any trace of impatience. Impostor syndrome is more common among female urologists.<sup>5</sup> Sixty-five percent of female urologists report experiencing gender discrimination.<sup>3</sup> Many take on more household responsibilities than their partners, and female urologists report high rates of pregnancy and childbirth-related complications.<sup>3</sup> In addition, there is a substantial gender pay gap in surgery.<sup>6,7</sup> It is no wonder that young female urologists are at increased risk of burnout.<sup>8</sup>

Data suggest that students are more likely to choose a specialty when they see mentors who are like them.<sup>9</sup> It is imperative that we recognize the importance of mentorship and allyship in supporting female urologists.

There remains a lack of female representation in senior leadership and academic positions in Canadian urology, including department heads and professors. There are few female senior authors on guideline panels,<sup>10</sup> and still a low, although increasing, level of representation on editorial boards.<sup>11</sup> Even in 2025, female medical students are deterred from pursuing urology due to the perception that it is a male-dominated specialty with a lack of female mentorship.<sup>12</sup> We look forward to welcoming Dr. Kurt McCammon to the CUA Annual Meeting in Saskatoon, where he speak on many of these issues.

Attention must be paid to attrition within urology residency training programs to ensure we are addressing the needs of all learners. Recently, the CUASF awarded the Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity, and Accessibility (EDIA) Grant to researchers to study this topic. Continued self-identification by CUA members is essential to understanding the demographics and needs of our national workforce and residency body.

As long-standing participants of the CUA Board, we are proud to play a proactive role in equalizing the field by identifying disparities and addressing barriers for female urologists and trainees in Canada. We embrace the opportunity to provide mentorship and take on leadership challenges in Canadian urology. We welcome a new era of CUA governance, where the presidency will be held by a female urologist for the next two years. Moreover, at the CUA 2027 Annual

Meeting, we will celebrate that for the first time in our organization's history, there will be an all-women trio on stage for the transfer of the President's medal!

The times are certainly changing, and we could not be prouder to be part of the urology community at this pivotal time.

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CORRESPONDENCE : Dr. Ashley Cox, Department of Urology, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, Canada; [ashleycox@dal.ca](mailto:ashleycox@dal.ca)