

Sexism in Surgery - Mad Men Meets Healthcare

And the Management of Midlife



[AVIVAH WITTENBERG-COX](#)

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WPSMS
The Working Party on Sexual
Misconduct in Surgery

BREAKING THE SILENCE

Addressing Sexual
Misconduct in Healthcare



AN INDEPENDENT REPORT ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT
BY COLLEAGUES IN THE SURGICAL WORKFORCE

[Breaking the Silence](#)

Spent a fascinating couple of days this week at a Women in Medicine conference. I had no idea! It was an eye-opening saga of everyday sexism that would shock most people in the corporate world. And what's so sobering about it, is that the misogyny seems to be aimed about equally at medical staff - and patients.

WIMIN, the conference, is in its third year. It was created by two doctors, Kate Stannard and Helen Burdett as a side hustle to their already crazy lives. They were tired of the highly siloed, boring medical conferences they were used to, and wanted to create an entirely different culture - one of openness, and connecting dots across disciplines and stages of care. It also wanted to stem the retention issues of women in the field.

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WIMIN was sold out and bursting the seams of the Spa Hotel in Tunbridge Wells. (Note the dates for next year's Sept 12-13 at the University of Cambridge). I met a ton of impressive change agents working on health and women's health, and promise to get many of them onto the podcast so you can hear what they shared. They included Dr. Nighat Arif, author of [The Knowledge](#). Dr. Louise Newson, a leading UK menopause expert, Professor Cari Newlands who prepared the report described below, and the two doctors, Dr. Becky Cox and Chelcie Jewitt, who are behind the site [Surviving in Scrubs](#), aimed at calling out sexism and harassment in health care.

I was going to give a keynote about longevity, 4-Quarter Lives and the opportunities of Q3 for women and careers. But the recent headline-grabbing report on [sexism in surgery](#) entitled ***Breaking the Silence: Addressing Sexual Misconduct in Surgery***, had made my other expertise pillar of gender balance - and how to get the issue on the strategic leadership agenda - suddenly a much higher priority.

This report smacks of both Mad Men and Harvey Weinstein. Powerful men in control of their environments and wielding power over lots of young women who need them to progress their careers. Full of



Letters to The Times reacting to the report

Somewhat reassuringly, a group of 50 doctors and colleagues got together to write [a rebuttal](#). A bit waffly in my mind, quibbling with some of his points, rather than with the searing sexism permeating his statement, but nonetheless. Hopefully, a teachable moment. Sounds like there is a lot of work to do in this sector. Watch this space.

