

Half a century ago...

Frauenkarrieren in der Spitzenmedizin

Susanne Suter
Université de Genève

Retrospectively...

- 1968 Federal certificate of Medicine, ECFMG
- 1968 Marriage to P.S.
- 1968-70 Residency Internal Medicine, Geneva
- Oct. 70 Birth of our first child
- 1971-72 Residency Pediatrics, Geneva
- Jul. 72 Birth second child
- 1973-74 Clin. and research fellow, Ped. Endocrinology UCSF
- 1974-76 Senior Resident Pediatrics, Geneva
- 1976-78 Chief Resident Pediatrics, Geneva
- Sept. 78 Birth third child
- 1979-82 Fellowship in Infectious Diseases, Geneva
- 1982-90 Full time Staff Member Pediatrics, Geneva
- 1990-2008: Head and Professor of Pediatrics
- 1991-2004: Chair of the Department of Pediatrics and Director of the University Childrens Hospital, Geneva
- 1994-2004 Member of the SNSF Research Council
- 2004-11: President of the Swiss Science and Technology Council

Positive elements

- Mutual understanding with my husband regarding personal priorities of both of us
- Open for opportunities rather than stick to a career plan
- Very important for me personally: no social pressure for a successful career

Difficulties

- Having children during postgraduate training was not considered acceptable : all our children were born «in between»
- Maternity leave legally defined, but no maternity insurance in the earlier years
- No child care centers, no working permits for household and child care employees
- The work of women was not considered as a contribution to the national economy

About Pediatrics

- One of the specialties most often chosen by women (1996, Geneva HUG: Ped>Pathology>Radiology>Int.Medicine)
- For future pediatricians having children themselves is most often a priority
- Salaries in private practice in Pediatrics are low, but little burn out
- Hospital Pediatrics: many units require 24-hour coverage: Neonatology, Intensive care unit, Emergency room, which means an important work load
- Specialized care concentrated in Pediatric Hospitals, very little in private practice

1990: Pediatrics at a turning point

- Progressive development of child specific specialisation, requires basic training in Pediatrics (importance of growth and development)
- Medical Faculty in Geneva: growing opportunities for collaborative research between clinical and basic science, impetus from curriculum reform

SNSF experience

- 1985-2004: ongoing research projects in my lab, supported by the SNSF
- 1994-2004: member of the SNSF-research council and its Marie Heim-Voegtlin committee
- MHV: initially thought for women who wished to return to research after a leave for family reasons.
- Evaluation of results suggested a change to a program encouraging women not to leave
- Creation of the SCORE-program, which was determinant in boosting clinical research in Switzerland

To be considered...

- The age range for having the first baby with the lowest risk for mother and child is 22-29 years
- In the first years of training residents can be substituted without problems, the more someone is qualified, the more difficult it is.
- This argues for encouraging rather than discouraging pregnancies during residencies

1990:How to promote the next generation

- Counseling at the very first contact (students, candidates for residency)
- Offer to discuss not only the planning of medical training, but also how to integrate best the planning of the family
- Encouragement not to delay pregnancies
- Offer of part-time jobs after the second year of training under specific conditions
- Expectations from my side: early, of course confidential, information about pregnancies..
- I did it my way...

The following years

- No problems, but an extra organisational effort
- Part-time residents: a very positive experience for the institution
- 1996: Catherine Cusin, IAWF: evaluation of the results
- 2000: assessment for the Faculty: no difference between women and men in specialty training and research abroad, women got as much funding as men

Femmes médecins et carrières

Catherine Cusin 1996

- Women are as confident as men in their capacity for an academic career, feel supported by the institution
- Percentage of acceptation of candidates for residency equal for women and men, but many more women candidates
- Pediatrics has the highest percentage of maternities compared to other departments
- Women are mainly in charge of household and children and feel less healthy than men

When I retired in 2008

- All pediatric specialties were developed and offered for in- and out-patients
- From an initial staff of about 30 to a staff of approximately 80 physicians (partly an effect of the law on working hours)
- Significant increase in external funding
- Three more women full Professors of Pediatrics
- A new generation in early career development, very different from my generation

The next generation

- Represented by Klara Posfay, married to a Child Psychiatrist, two children
- 1994: Federal Certificate of Medicine
- 94-98: Resident and Senior Resident in Pediatrics, Geneva
- 98-00: Fellow Infectious Diseases, Geneva
- 2001: Chief-resident Pediatrics
- 01-04: Fellow, Ped.Inf.Diseases, Pittsburgh
- 04-09: SCORE and CDCS
- 2009: Full time staff member Pediatrics
- 2011: PD
- 2014: Assistant Professor Pediatrics