

Over 60% of women doctors claim sexual harassment by patients

IMO says bullying, sexual harassment are common features of Irish medical practice

Fri, Dec 8, 2017, 12:44 Updated: Fri, Dec 8, 2017, 12:48

[Martin Wall](#)



21.4 per cent of female non-consultant hospital doctors and 11.5 per cent of male non-consultant hospital doctors report that they had experienced sexual harassment in the previous two years. Photograph: Getty

More than 60 per cent of female non-consultant doctors who say they have been sexually harassed in hospitals maintain that the perpetrator was a patient.

Nearly a third said they had been sexually harassed by another doctor, according to the findings of a research paper which was released by the [Irish Medical Organisation](#) (IMO) on Friday.

The Irish Times reported on Friday that the IMO had said, in a submission to the [Public Service Pay Commission](#) earlier this week, that bullying, harassment and sexual harassment appeared to remain common features of medical practice in [Ireland](#), despite efforts to curtail their impact and prevalence.

The full research paper, on which the submission to the Public Service Pay Commission was based, maintains that 21.4 per cent of female non-consultant hospital doctors and

11.5 per cent of male non-consultant hospital doctors report that they had experienced sexual harassment in the previous two years.

The paper says among the female non-consultant doctors who reported sexual harassment in a study of IMO members, 30 per cent said they were sexually harassed by another doctor, 13 per cent by an employer or member of management, 9 per cent by a non-physician co-worker, and 61 per cent by a patient.

- [Fifth of women doctors claim sexual harassment](#)
- [HSE seeks action on consultants' private pay](#)
- [Bullying and harassment costs health service €700,000 since 2012](#)

The research paper says 3 per cent of male consultants but no female consultants maintained in the study that they had been sexually harassed. It says 5.2 per cent of female GPs said they had experienced sexual harassment.

The IMO research paper defines sexual harassment as “unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature”.

The IMO paper also says that 20.7 per cent of NCHDs, 10.1 per cent of consultants, 5.4 per cent of GPs, and 4.4 per cent of community health and public health doctors surveyed report being bullied on the basis of their gender.

“Female doctors report such gender-based bullying at a far higher rate. In particular, female non-consultant hospital doctors appear to experience these workplace problems most commonly.”

It says the reasons for the higher prevalence of reported bullying amongst female doctors is likely complex. It may be explained by an interaction between actual higher prevalence in experiences of bullying against women, coupled with a lower perception of opportunities for defence against this behaviour and less reluctance to classify undermining behaviour as bullying amongst women. “More than one-in-four female non-consultant hospital doctors report they have been bullied on the basis of their gender during the past two years, whereas only one-in-seventeen male non-consultant hospital doctors identified themselves as experiencing such behaviour.”

The research paper says of the female non-consultant hospital doctors who state they are victims of gender-based bullying, 50 per cent report being bullied by another doctor, 40 per cent by an employer or member of management, 23 per cent by a non-physician co-worker, and 33 per cent by a patient.

The HSE said it took such allegations very seriously and encouraged any doctors affected “to employ the robust policies and procedures afforded to them to address such allegations”.

“To date, we have not seen this survey, and would encourage the IMO to share this data with us through some of the existing consultation framework with relevant HR departments.”

