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Celebrating Women in Medicine Month–Key Takeaways and Highlights from Our AAFPRS WFPS Symposium



Women in Medicine Month is held each September, with a focus on recognizing the contributions, leadership, and achievements of women physicians, researchers, residents, and medical students—as well as to honor those who offer their time, wisdom, energy and support to advance women with careers in medicine.

And, in the spirit of Women in Medicine Month, there is no better example of advancing women within our specialty than the exceptional, second annual AAFPRS Women in Facial Plastic Surgery Symposium that was held by the AAFPRS WFPS Committee on September 23 at our recent 2026 AAFPRS Annual Meeting in Last Vegas. The symposium creates a space for women in facial plastic surgery to collaborate, network, and share their unique experiences. This year's program had over 100 attendees (see photo) and was led by Cindy Gregg, MD, chair of the WFPS Committee, and vice chair, Myriam Loyo Li, MD.

Key takeaways

The afternoon culminated in a captivating roundtable discussion, led by Drs. Gregg and Loyo Li that centered on three prompts: defining success, building opportunity through mentorship and sponsorship, and turning ideas into action. Several core themes emerged from both our keynote speakers and roundtable discussions, including:

1) Success is evolving. At baseline, we are all successful. What success looks like depends on our current season of life and reflects an integration of the many pillars we value. Financial success may mean survival for a trainee and growth for a practicing physician. Clinical success may center on productivity early in one's career and shift toward refining outcomes for more senior surgeons. At many points, success means integrating career and family. However we define it today, one common thread runs through every definition: building and fostering community.

2) Build your "board of directors"—mentors, sponsors, and people to lean on. During training, these relationships tend to be formal; in practice, they can be as informal as a group chat or a colleague to discuss cases with. Mentors provide direct guidance, while sponsors advocate for you when you're not in the room. Although sponsors have historically been of the opposite gender, same-gender sponsorship has grown in recent years. Mentorship is also an avenue for vulnerability and sharing mistakes. While it can feel intimidating to admit missteps, mentors are often honored to be trusted with them. Finally, invisible mentorship—seeing other women do what you aspire to do—inspires the next generation.

3) Turn ideas into action. The group closed by identifying several concrete action items:

- **Self-advocacy:** having the confidence to ask for leadership positions
- **Group messaging system:** smaller focus groups to improve

See Gender Influence, page 9

Gender Influence, Discrimination, and Mentorship Data

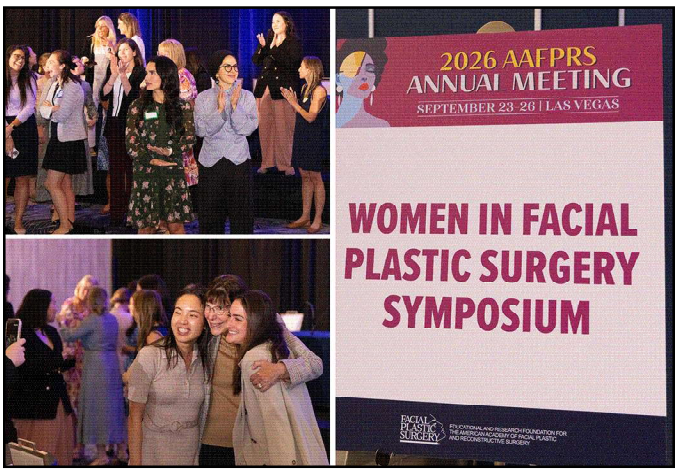
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participation and utilization, fostering a community
- **Mentorship and sponsorship database:** a centralized resource that lists physicians who welcome observers to their practices
- **Committee advocacy:** continued advocacy for accommodations, such as lactation rooms at board examinations

Program highlights
The symposium began with a lunch, where attendees were encouraged to network with fellow women facial plastic surgeons. Tara Capalbo, vice president and general manager of Galderma, kicked off the program by sharing her journey of integrating an ambitious career with a busy family life, along with her five factors for success.

Following lunch, two keynote presentations brought expertise from beyond the operating room. The first was delivered by Mariner Wealth Advisors. Frances Cronlund, a senior wealth advisor, has focused on financial advising for physicians for more than 16 years. She was joined by Brian Lightening, who is responsible for strategic growth initiatives at Mariner. Together, they addressed the unique financial needs of women physicians. They emphasized building, preserving, and enjoying wealth through strategic saving and investing.

The second keynote was given by Glenn Morley, a senior consultant to plastic surgery, dermatology, and medical spa practices with more than two decades of experience. She outlined her core priorities when consulting for a facial plastic surgery practice and explained how to re-architect success. These tenets included defining success and aligning your practice with it, spreading and building wealth strategically, and creating wealth early.

Note: Galderma and Mariner Wealth Advisors also provided financial sponsorship to help make the symposium possible—and the AAFPRS appreciates their support.



To facilitate the transition to round tables and spark discussion, *I presented my research on gender-related experiences in facial plastic and reconstructive surgery as an early-career faculty member of AAFPRS. Our mixed-methods survey was sent out to AAFPRS members and quantified the different experiences women facial plastic surgeons have. These ranged from gender influence on career, gender discrimination, and mentorship influences based on gender. It also provided qualitative data to characterize participants' lived experiences. The research findings opened up the floor for further discussion at our round table prompts.

To close the symposium, Dr. Gregg outlined next steps—the committee will share its progress on action items at a virtual follow-up meeting in the coming weeks. Attendees left with lifelong connections, meaningful takeaways, and momentum to carry this work forward.

We thank Drs. Gregg and Loyo Li for leading the Women in Facial Plastic Surgery Committee and Patricia Adair, AAFPRS director of member relations, for helping organize this event.

AAFPRS members interested in joining the Women in Facial Plastic Surgery Committee can contact me directly by email at caitlinmcoviello@gmail.com or Ms. Adair at padair@aafprs.org or any of the committee leaders named in this article.

Our third annual AAFPRS WFPS symposium will be held Wednesday, September 22, 2027, at the AAFPRS Annual Meeting in Austin, Texas and we look forward to seeing you there! ■

Editor's Note: This article was written by Caitlin Coviello, MD, MBA, member of the Women in Facial Plastic Surgery Committee.*

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