

Pregnancy and the Plastic Surgery Resident

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INTRODUCTION: Combining pregnancy with plastic surgery residency has historically been difficult. Two decades ago, 36% of plastic surgery program directors surveyed actively discouraged pregnancy among residents, and 33% of women plastic surgeons suffered from infertility.¹ Most alarmingly, 26% of plastic surgery trainees had an elective abortion during residency.¹ With increasing numbers of women training in plastic surgery, this historical lack of support for pregnancy deserves further attention.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: To explore the current accommodations made for the pregnant plastic surgery resident, an electronic survey was sent to 88 plastic surgery program directors in the United States.

RESULTS: Fifty-four responded, for a response rate of 61.36%. On average, a director trained a total of 7.91 women among 17.28 residents trained over 8.19 years. Of the women residents, 1.43 were pregnant during a director's tenure, with 1.35 of those residents taking maternity leave. An average 1.75 male residents took paternity leave. Approximately one-third of programs had a formal maternity/paternity leave policy (34.62%), which, in most cases, was limited to defining allowed weeks of leave, time required to fulfill program requirements, and remuneration during leave.

CONCLUSION: This survey of plastic surgery directors is a first step in defining the challenges training programs face in supporting the pregnant resident. Directors provided comments describing their challenges accommodating an absent resident in a small program and complying with the American Board of Plastic Surgery's required weeks of training per year. A discussion of these challenges is followed by suggested solutions.

REFERENCES:

1. Eskinazi L, Weston, J. The pregnant plastic surgical resident: results of a survey of women plastic surgeons and plastic surgery residency directors. *Plast Reconstr Surg.* 1995;95:330-335