

ROBERT T. FREEMAN DENTAL SOCIETY MEETING
HOSTED BY CHERYLE BAPTISTE, DDS
APRIL 20, 2021
VIRTUAL iGIANT® EVENT

*Dr. Mark provided a brief overview of the mission and vision of iGIANT® (impact of Gender/Sex on Innovation and Novel Technologies) as well as examples of the need for gendered innovation and design in our personal and professional lives. In the healthcare profession, there is a need for PPE, instruments and tools to fit and work for everyone. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it is apparent that the inequities in design elements such as programs, policies, protocols and products have resulted in increased mortality among female health care professionals who are on the front lines compared to their male counterparts. Prior to this presentation, it was mentioned that dentists will increasingly provide Covid-19 tests and vaccinations in their dental office. Dentists have been using PPE even prior to the pandemic and have intensified these efforts in addition to other infection control practices.

* Attendees, now iGIANT ambassadors, discussed the challenges of a comfortable and practical fit for their PPE including surgical tops and pants as well as face masks. It was suggested that a more precise fit using anthropometry would help.

*Issues surrounding burn-out and stress were mentioned in relation to the use of face masks which hinder communication through body language especially for female dentists who may have a different style of communication with their patients. It is known that the electronic medical record (EMR) may contribute to burn-out and fatigue since the system is designed for the way men process information and it may require additional effort by women to work with these systems.

*Gender differences surrounding communication styles were discussed especially for male students to be more cognizant that female patients may need more time to discuss their concerns. Schools should ensure that dental students are more aware of these differences.

*Generally, dental hygienists are female and the tools and instruments that they use are designed for their hand size and agility. It was suggested that female dentists and other dental specialists could benefit from a gendered design approach which would improve the safety and quality of their practices.

*Next steps include a session at a larger June conference for dentists to address some of the issues surrounding occupational stress due to the pandemic. It was suggested that an informal survey be conducted among members to gauge their level and cause of stress. Additionally, it was recommended that a longer roundtable be held and include industry representatives since there is a need for improved designs from PPE to instruments, tools and chairs.