
The role of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in Graduate Medical Education

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The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) was originally dedicated and oriented towards the service and welfare of the practicing clinicians. As the years passed, it evolved into the premier organization dedicated to continued medical education of its members without relinquishing their previous duties. The ACOG, the ABOG, and the APGO together make a formidable trio that has dedicated itself to improve the training and education of all its members for the betterment of the health of the women of our nation.

It has not been an easy endeavor, but throughout the years of hard work, we have gained the respect and the admiration of many other specialty organizations of the nation and abroad.

In 1930, the incorporation of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology, sanctioned the union of obstetrics and gynecology into a single specialty. Around the same time, the practice of obstetrics and gynecology began a period of rapid growth, both in the number of physicians and in scientific achievements.

In 1951, ACOG created the specialty's first enduring, nationwide, democratic, professional organization that was open to all qualified applicants. Today, board certification in obstetrics/gynecology is a requirement to become an ACOG Fellow, and about 95 per cent of American obstetricians-gynecologists are members of ACOG. Women comprise 38 percent of ACOG's total members of about fifty thousand, and 65.5 percent of the Junior Fellows are women. ACOG members include both generalists and subspecialists, which consist of maternal-fetal medicine specialists, gynecologic oncologists, and reproductive endocrinologists. A new subspecialty, urogynecology, was recently officially recognized.

Membership in (ACOG) has reached 50,619: distributed as 27,672 Fellow; 1,162 Fellow senior Status; 95 Inactive Fellows; 6,334 Life Fellows; 59 Honorary Fellows; 246 Associate Members/Fellows; 200 International Members; 5,532 Junior Fellows in Practice; 4,062 Junior Fellows in Training; 1,865 Educational Affiliates; and all-time high for Medical Students of 3,392 members.

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ACOG is divided into nine geographic districts and one nongeographic district, the Armed Forces District. Two of the nine geographic districts are single states, New York and California, and the remaining seven are comprised of multiple states. Each district is composed of multiple sections that may be single states, territories or multiple non-U.S. areas, eg, Central America. Currently, there are 83 sections in ACOG. Each district has a district chair and a vice chair who are elected. Some districts elect their secretaries and treasurers, and others appoint them. Each district advisory council is composed of district officers, section chairs, and such other representatives as selected by the council. Each district advisory council meets, twice a year at a minimum. Sections have a section chair and vice chair, and may have other officers. Both districts and sections have Junior Fellow officers. Districts and sections also have various committees and other appointed positions depending upon their needs.

Throughout its history, its primary objective has been to maintain the highest possible standards of health care for women. The College supports an extensive continuing medical educational program throughout the year, so that its Fellows are kept current on the latest developments in the field. The Annual Clinical Meeting is the educational highlight of the year, attracting obstetricians and gynecologists from the US and other countries.

The college also keeps its members informed about current medical care standards and its professional recommendations through publications including Educational Bulletins, Committee Opinions, and Practice Bulletins. ACOG also publishes *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, a monthly peer-reviewed scientific journal, *ACOG Clinical Review*, and *ACOG Today*, a monthly newsletter. For the practitioner, the most valuable source of contemporary information, as well as standards of care, in all probability, is the annual publication of the more than 1000 page *Compendium* with a 50 page-long *Subject Index*. In keeping with its goal of promoting public education, ACOG publishes a variety of materials including *Planning Your Pregnancy and Birth*, *Encyclopedia of Women's Health*, and a magazine, *Managing Menopause* in

addition to over 200 patient education pamphlets on aspects of women.

The operational mission statement of ACOG is: "The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the pre-eminent authority on women's health, is a professional membership organization dedicated to advancing women's health by building and sustaining the obstetric and gynecologic community, and actively supporting its members. The College pursues this mission through education, practice, research, and advocacy. ACOG emphasizes life-long learning, incorporation of new knowledge and information technology, and by recognizing the need for its governance structure to evolve. To achieve its strategic goals, ACOG will develop an operational plan that includes appropriate metrics".

To accurately portray some of the most rewarding aspects of our specialty, educational change is called for. Appreciation of differences in gender biology should be incorporated into school curriculum and medical school clerkships must include more efficiently learning about surgical interventions, and increase the opportunities of clinical experience. In addition, it would recommend greater participation in prenatal diagnosis and obstetric counseling, and strongly urge counteracting the trend of limited continuity of care. This would enhance student-patient connections. These experiences, with time in labor and delivery room, will improve the educational process for virtually every medical student.

Of all the complaints leveled against physicians, insensitive behavior contributes most to litigation and patient dissatisfaction. Implementing assessments based on communication skills, professionalism and other humanistic qualities that define good doctors, could greatly affect the medical liability crisis.

The College continues to seek new practice paradigms; to explore ways in which educational processes and policies can be redefined, and to expand our understanding of the contemporary practice of women's health care.

We must unite in our pursuit of educational excellence, providing the best possible care to our women. The changing realities of our profession are constant. We accept these challenges for the future.

Resumen

Originalmente, nuestro Colegio estaba dedicado al bienestar de los médicos practicando en la comunidad y el bienestar de nuestras pacientes. Pasados los años, el Colegio ha evolucionado a una organización dedicada a la educación médica continua para sus miembros y, juntos con otras organizaciones como el APGO y el ABOG, se han enfocado en mejorar el entrenamiento de todos los obstetras y ginecólogos de la comunidad, siempre con el bienestar de las mujeres de la nación en mente.

En 1951 ACOG fue creado y desde entonces lo anteriormente mencionado ha sido nuestra misión. Actualmente, cuenta con sobre 50,500 Fellows. De las múltiples publicaciones de ACOG, la que más sobresale es el Compendium que se publica anualmente y tiene todos los últimos adelantos y postulados de la institución sobre los "guidelines" que rigen la práctica.

El Colegio esta dividido en 10 distritos, 9 de ellos geográficos y uno que consiste de aquellos obstetras y ginecólogos de las fuerzas armadas de los Estados Unidos de América. Los distritos están divididos en 83 secciones, siendo la mayoría limitadas a la extensión geográfica de un estado.

El Colegio continua buscando nuevos paradigmas para nuestra práctica; explorando aquellos medios en que los objetivos educacionales y las políticas de la práctica se puedan redefinir. Además de expandir nuestros conocimientos de las practicas contemporáneas del cuidado de la mujer. Debemos unirnos en la búsqueda de las excelencias educativas tomando en cuenta que los cambios en la tecnología moderna siguen en progreso, juntos aceptaremos todos estos retos para el futuro.