

Applicant: Aidan Galati  
June 24, 2019

## Raab Writing Fellowship Proposal

### **Project Title**

Feminizing the Medical: A Review of Sex Biases in Medicine

### **Faculty Mentor**

Deborah Harris, PhD  
harris-moore@writing.ucsb.edu

### **Project Overview**

As a long-term student researcher and shadowing intern in an Emergency Department, I have observed first-hand the miracles of modern medicine. Last summer, however, I witnessed an event that challenged my idealistic view of the medical profession. On a slow day in the emergency room, a seemingly healthy woman who arrived with cold symptoms had died within hours of admission due to a treatable, yet overlooked heart attack. Although she presented with the common female signs of heart attack, her doctors failed to notice them; residents were thoroughly trained to be hyper-aware of the symptoms in male patients, but not in female patients. Heart attack is a deadly symptom of Cardiovascular Disease, which is the leading cause of death for women in the United States. If heart attacks are common, life-threatening events in women, why are doctors improperly trained to treat it – to the extent in which patients' lives have been lost?

This burning question sparked my interest in women's health issues, and specifically in differential patient care of the sexes. In the Writing for the Health Professions class this past quarter, I delved deep into data regarding outcomes for women and men presenting with sex-different diseases (illnesses that manifest differently in males and females). I found a gender gap in outcomes for nearly all of these diseases due to lack of physician recognition of female symptoms, even for ailments that were more common in women than in men. After thoroughly examining the intricacies of the history of medicine, modern medical education, and the culture among physicians and nurses, I have begun to understand how this issue came to be. My initial finding was that the medical community in the United States is ridden with *implicit biases*: prejudices that exist subconsciously and often are against one's personal beliefs.

In this project, I hope to complete a research article consisting of a comprehensive review of differential patient care of the sexes in medicine, a thorough explanation to how this problem came to be (even in our largely gender-inclusive society), and a proposal of feasible solutions to this issue. I plan to rely mainly on scholarly articles and books as resources. However, I'd also like to bolster my content by including personal interviews with medical professionals and patients on the matter (personal testimonials, insight into the medical field, etc.). The URCA journal is one potential publication option, though I will be exploring others.

### **Project Goals**

Although I have enjoyed writing for as long as I can remember, a knack for neuroscience inspired me to major in Biopsychology at UCSB. Despite majoring in STEM, I felt a calling to

break the confines of my major and continue my pursuit of writing. Having the privilege of becoming a RAAB Writing Fellow would not only allow me to strengthen my passion for women's health issues (while indulging in humanities), but also challenge me to become the best writer I can be. Atul Gawande is a major role model of mine, as I aspire to make an impact on medicine by becoming both a physician and writer. I believe that entering medicine with the purpose of eliciting change and advocating for women's health is the first step to achieving that goal.

I would complete this project in hopes of educating the academic and medical communities on an overlooked issue that still persists today. My goal isn't to convince readers that modern medicine is a sexist field. Rather, I hope to highlight further advances that could be made in patient care while still acknowledging that medical culture today is the most inclusive and effective it has ever been. I hope that this project will inspire my peers to push themselves to ask questions no one has before and to constantly pursue the betterment of their future career fields, regardless of how advanced they may be today. I feel that this level of curiosity is the key for our next generation of young adults to make a positive impact on the world.

### **Quarterly Timeline**

*Fall* – Conduct a thorough research of material, perform interviews. Outline and organize material. Finish first draft outline of article by January 1<sup>st</sup>.

*Winter* – Revise outline if needed, finish up any final research if needed, begin writing article by February 1<sup>st</sup>. Finish first draft article by April 1.

*Spring* – Write 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> (or more) drafts of article. Finish project. (NOTE: I will be only taking two classes in Spring, so I will have ample time to write/revise).

### **Possible Expenses**

The majority of this project will be research-based. Therefore, I expect most of my expenses to be for purchase of books and scholarly articles, and for travel to medical libraries or special collections in the area. I also would like to pay anyone I interview for their time and participation. A proposed breakdown is as follows:

Interviews: \$30 *each* (at least 7 planned interviews) = ~\$210

Research: scholarly articles and books = ~\$250

Transportation: to and from interviews as well as special collections in the area = ~\$60

Overall: \$210 + \$250 + \$60 = \$520 total