Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the identity(ies) and experiences of a selected group of female physicians in five provincial states of Mexico. In the last 30 years the number of female physicians in Mexico has grown considerably and yet little is known about these women. Data for this work were drawn from two in-depth interviews with 99 female physicians during 1995-1996. In addition, physicians were asked to complete a personal diary to illustrate the nature of their daily experiences over a three-month period; the gap between the two interviews. Analysis reveals female physician identity is shaped by Mexican health care service structures, personal characteristics and goals, and career development choices and opportunities. Association with particular spaces and places influences female physician career development and identity. The multiple identities of these professional women and their lived experiences can result in various pressures and tensions in family and career life. As a result these women make choices about career development; some reassess their career goals given their family and household circumstances and thus their career development may appear to be constrained. The paper concludes by suggesting that changes in Mexican health institutions and the science of medicine may lead to changes in female physician identity.

Keywords

Key words: identity; physicians, women; career development; life change events; Mexico