Inaugural ‘global women in cardiology early careers’ case competition in collaboration with EHJ - Case Reports

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Case reports are perhaps the oldest form of medical publication. Indeed, they play an important role in introducing junior clinicians to the world of academic medicine, educating them in techniques of writing, editing, and submitting manuscripts for peer-review and publication. The European Heart Journal – Case Reports (EHJ-CR) was founded on the premise of providing an educational platform to cultivate academic skills and professional development of current and emerging clinicians. This format of medical publishing also provides an ideal platform for showcasing talent and enhancing the visibility of women in cardiology (WIC), who remain under-represented in many areas including procedural fields, academia, and leadership positions.

The ‘Global Women in Cardiology Early Careers’ (Global WIC EC) group is an international collaboration of trainee and early career women in cardiology from six different continents. The group’s inaugural initiative was a global virtual case competition in collaboration with the EHJ-CR, with the intention of showcasing female talent in academic cardiology. EHJ-CR supported this online WIC webinar during the COVID-19 pandemic, by championing the event, and publishing the winning case report with a full waiver of article publication fees in this edition of the journal.

The case submission guidelines were in line with the EHJ-CR submission criteria. This included a 250-word abstract and a PowerPoint slide set (limited to 10 slides), briefly outlining the case, incorporating meaningful images, and three key learning points.

The webinar was extensively promoted on social media in the lead up to the event. Social media (SoMe), which has provided a particularly useful platform for creating virtual communities of women in cardiology, is an effective tool for advocacy, education, and enhancing visibility. Key hashtags relating to WIC which are well-recognized on social media include #WIC, #SheForShe, and #HeforShe. Harnessing the power of SoMe for education and networking, an online campaign was launched to promote this case competition, calling for cases internationally via Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook with the hashtags #EHJCaseReports and #WICases. Platforms including Whatsapp and email correspondence were also used for personal and regional communications.

More than 60 high-quality case submissions from six continents were received from a wide range of cardiology specialities including imaging, interventional, electrophysiology, heart failure, cardio-oncology, adult congenital, and paediatric cardiology. Entrants included female doctors at various career stages, including internal medicine residents, cardiology trainees and fellows, and early career consultants.

The top 10 cases were shortlisted by a vetting team who were blinded to authors’ names and affiliations, and selected candidates were invited to present their cases at the inaugural Global WIC virtual case competition. The webinar was held on the 15th of August 2020 via a Zoom virtual webinar platform and simultaneously livestreamed on the Global WIC Facebook page, reaching an international audience of over 1000 people across varying career stages (Figure 1).

The presenters were judged by a panel of four international judges, who scored these cases on criteria including the novelty of the case, clarity of learning objectives, the relevance of content,
positive patients, thus obviating the need for transoesophageal modality imaging in the non-invasive assessment of COVID-19. This case reflects the role and utility of multi-modality imaging as an effective tool in navigating diagnostic dilemmas during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The winning case published in this edition of EHJ-CR was presented by Pragya Ranjan and colleagues from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York who highlighted the role of multimodality imaging and angiography, highlighted key learning points, and resulted in thought-provoking, relevant discussions on treatment protocols. Given the increasing rarity of unique, one-of-a-kind cases, the publication of relatively common conditions with a strong narrative and of current prevailing interest, complemented by important learning points or instructive images, are becoming increasingly coveted. This webinar also provided opportunities for women from varying geographical backgrounds, clinical experience, and career stages to be part of a global WIC event during the pandemic, obviating the barriers of access, geographical considerations, finances, and leave arrangements encountered when planning to attend an international scientific event.

Female representation and visibility in cardiology are improving; however, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed additional challenges to female physicians, potentially leading to a negative impact on career advancement. Furthermore, women in cardiology face varying challenges in across different career stages, even in pre-pandemic times, with some issues more relevant to trainees and early career cardiologists, including a general lack of visibility, few positive female role models, and mentorship.

The Global WIC EC group was formed during the pandemic in June 2020, with the aim to fostering an international network of trainee and early career women in cardiology across the globe. Further objectives include identifying and seeking solutions to unique as well as common challenges faced by contemporaries, mentorship, and collaborations on global projects, with opportunities for learning, scientific engagement, and enhanced visibility of women in cardiology.

There is a need for active and deliberate interventions and the creation of opportunities that support the advancement of women cardiologists. Opportunity begets opportunity: in fact, the winner of the case competition was invited to present her case at an Australian virtual WIC event the following month and network with international colleagues. In the current virtual climate, collaborations such as the one formed between Global WIC EC and EHJ-CR is a testament to the potential of effective partnerships and the strength of social media and online platforms in enhancing educational and networking opportunities. It also highlights the potential of journals in creating opportunities for promoting the careers of emerging clinicians,
particularly women in cardiology, irrespective of perceived geographical barriers.

**Lead author biography**

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