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The gender initiative

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618 and 620.

The fact that boys and girls are different probably first hit most of us as early as our days on the playground. Most of us have spent a considerable portion of our adult lives enjoying and trying to understand those differences. Unfortunately, it has become clear in recent years that not enough attention has been paid to the facets of those differences that express themselves as different risk factors, clinical manifestations, and outcomes of diseases and operations in men and women.

As surgeons, we assume that our operations are constant across the genders, yet outcomes generally remain less favorable for women than for men. Presumably, if operations are the same, inherent biologic factors must be operative and ultimately influencing outcomes. Just over a year ago, the *Journal* proposed to a small group of women that a task force be organized with the intent of coordinating a number of articles and editorials that would address some of the known issues that should be considered in understanding how gender differences affect patients undergoing cardiac and general thoracic surgical procedures. Ably led by Dr Nancy Nussmeier, this and forthcoming articles in the *Journal* will help to focus our attention and understanding on some of the challenges inherent in the management of women with diseases treated by thoracic surgeons.

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