Across all employment sectors in the UK, female workers earn less than their male counterparts. This gender pay gap has continued despite repeated efforts to tackle the underlying factors.

In medicine, even though nationally agreed salary scales should eliminate the effects of individuals negotiating their own pay, the pay gap is wider than in many other professions and employment sectors. Data from the Office for National Statistics on median annual gross pay show that, in 2016, female doctors working full time earned 34% less a year than their male counterparts.

Overall, the pay gap in medicine has grown over the past decade. In 2006, female doctors earned 26% less than their male colleagues. The gap fell to 23% in 2007 before rising to 39% in 2010, and falling again to 34% in 2016. Since 2008, female doctors working full time have consistently earned a third less than male doctors.

The gap is wider for doctors than for other employees. On average, across all employment groups, women working full time earn 19% less than men. Female accountants earn 19% less, female pharmacists earn 18% less, female solicitors earn 12% less, and female health service and social care managers earn 11% less.

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Jeremy Hunt, I’m after you

What was your earliest ambition?
To be a naturalist, like David Attenborough. I used to dissect mouse bones from owl pellets and inspect my own hair nits under a microscope.

Who has been your biggest inspiration?
My father—an exceptionally dedicated rural GP—and Tim Littlewood, the outgoing president of the British Society for Haematology: the compassion and sincerity with which he talks to his patients is the model I try to live up to.

What was the worst mistake in your career?
Accidentally head-butting the then prime minister, John Major. It’s a long story.

What was your best career move?
Following my heart at age two to leave life as a television journalist.

Who has been the best and the worst health secretary in your lifetime?
I’m unsure of the best, but the all time nadir was undoubtedly reached with Hunt—a man so Orwellian in his misuse of language, he once devoted an entire speech to maintaining that “the path to lower cost is the path to safer care.”

Who is the person you would most like to thank, and why?
Oddly, also Jeremy Hunt, who inadvertently gave junior doctors our voice and the determination to use it.

To whom would you most like to apologise?
My husband, Dave, who was hoodwinked into marrying a swish TV type just as she evolved into a penniless student, distracted doctor, and medical “militant.”

If you were given £1m what would you spend it on?
I’d love to say a charity, but Finn, aged 10, has already spent it: “For Dad a Lamborghini, for Abbey all the Lego in the world, and for me a year long trip to Disney World.”

What single change has made the most difference in your field?
Social media: so vital as a tool of empowerment and democratic change. In 21st century political disputes, the smartphone is mightier than the sword.

Do you support doctor assisted suicide?
As a palliative care doctor I’m fearful that, if we were to encompass terminating lives, the vital trust between patient and doctor may be irrevocably altered.

What book should every doctor read?
Wonder, by R J Palacio—to remind us all, when given the choice between being right or being kind, to choose to be kind, every time.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?
Books. Losing yourself in an imagined world feels like the ultimate decadence when the children need feeding, the washing needs hanging, and a fading e-Portfolio lies gathering electronic dust inside your laptop.

Where does alcohol fit into your life?
Regularly.

What is your pet hate?
Politicians who say one thing with all sincerity while acting entirely otherwise.

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