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Does the Sex of the Surgeon Matter?

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Dr. Sydney R. Coleman, a plastic surgeon in New York City, said he hired a young woman as an associate in 2004 in order to better communicate with patients. Now he often invites that woman, Dr. Alesia P. Saboeiro, to join in his consultations, to offer her opinion and to answer questions patients are too embarrassed to ask him, he said.

"I am a good listener," Dr. Coleman said. "But no matter how hard I try to get into the head of a woman, I am never going to understand her completely."