

Gender Disparity on Editorial Boards

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We are seeing concerted efforts across the field of urology to address substantial racial and gender disparities. While racial biases vary according to region of the world, gender disparities are more or less universal in global urology. The SIU is able to capture racial diversity better than some other organizations simply by ensuring that all the regions of the world that it represents are included in its activities. On the other hand, this same global representation makes it particularly challenging to address gender disparities within the SIU. Most countries still have very few female urologists, so that broad geographic inclusion may counteract our objective of gender equity. The editorial board of our journal, the *SIUJ*, is a microcosm of the parent organization.

Nguyen et al. recently reported on gender diversity in editorial boards of four of the five urology journals with the highest impact factors and how this changed from 2015 to 2020. The four journals were *European Urology*, *Journal of Urology*, *European Urology Focus*, and *British Journal of Urology International*. The proportion of women on these editorial boards was approximately consistent with the proportion of women in urology in the United States (although only one of the journals was from the United States), and there was a noticeable increase in the proportion of women on the editorial boards over the five years from 7.5% to 11.9%. Does this proportionality and growth over time suggest that we should be satisfied with the gender representation, or do we need to strive for better inclusion of women in urology on these editorial boards? Certainly, these numbers need to increase as the number of women in urology also needs to increase. However, we cannot wait for the number of women in our specialty to increase before seeking greater equity in our editorial boards. Providing positive role models of women on the editorial boards of major urologic journals is an important step to attract women into our field.

At some point we would like to arrive at the point where we do not need to think about gender equity because we have natural balance at all levels of organized urology. Although we are a long way from that target, I was involved in two recent committees that demonstrated the progress we would like to see. In the one committee we were reviewing nominations for leadership of the committee and only women were nominated. In the other setting, the top scoring applicant for an award was a female urologist from an underrepresented minority. In both cases an environment had been created where the best and brightest rose to the top, and these stars or rising stars just happened to be a ringing endorsement for equity and diversity.

Nguyen et al. focused on the academic productivity of male and female editors, highlighting that female editors had a median of 96 publications (“research documents”) and an H-index of 25 while men had 217 publications and an H-index of 39.5. Women were also less likely to have attained the rank of Professor. The authors discuss some of the factors that could impact the differential research productivity of men and women, but perhaps this is also a measure of women being promoted into these editorial board positions at earlier stages in their careers in an effort to overcome the gender gap. The age of the editorial board members is unfortunately not known. This is not to say that the underlying issues of the “leaky pipeline” discussed in the paper are not highly relevant, but we should nonetheless embrace the promotion of early career women into these roles, and we should recognize that this will impact the type of metrics measured by Nguyen et al.

The one finding of the study by Nguyen et al. that is particularly pertinent to the *SIUJ* is the fact that all but one of the female editors were affiliated with institutions from high-income countries. The gender disparity, at least in academic urology, would appear to be greater in middle- and lower-income countries than in high-income countries[1]. This is of particular interest to the *SIUJ* because the SIU membership spans all income categories, and we pride ourselves in serving the entire membership. Our editorial board reflects this mission with similarly broad

geographic representation, but ultimately with a large gender gap. One of our key challenges is to identify women from many of our member countries who would be interested in the editorial activities of the *SIUJ*.

How can we overcome the gender disparity on our editorial board? Two of the other urology journals have made noteworthy recent additions to their editorial boards that are likely to have future impact on diversity and equity. *The Journal of Urology* has introduced Early Career Editors[2] and *Urology* has added a monthly feature under the direction of a dedicated Associate Editor[3] on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Both moves demonstrate the creativity required to take on these important issues in our field.

In this vein, we at the *SIU Journal* would like to create an environment where the best and brightest from all over the world can rise to the top in our editorial board. We would love to hear from contributors around the globe who would be interested in serving the Journal by performing peer review and contributing to the editorial process at the Journal. We really need a grass-roots effort to increase gender equity and racial diversity on our editorial board. We would love to hear your thoughts on how we can improve gender representation in the *SIUJ*.

References

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3. @EricKleinMD. Based on the success of the April & May issues of UROLOGY devoted to DEI I am pleased to announce a new regular monthly section of @urogoldjournal devoted to these topics to be led by @yawnyame, who joins our Editorial Board as Associate Editor. Please send us your manuscripts! June 15, 2022. <https://mobile.twitter.com/EricKleinMD/status/1537223428662386689>. Accessed June 23, 2022.