



A study of the number of female editors-in-chief of dermatology journals[☆]



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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Over the past 50 years the proportion of women entering medical school has vastly increased, however there still exists a gender gap in top leadership positions, including within academic medicine. It is important to investigate the influence of women in this area, and assess change over time. The aim of the study was to assess the number of women who have acted as editors-in-chief of prominent dermatology journals over the 20th and 21st centuries.

Methods: A list of 25 journals was collated based on their impact factors and prominence. Information regarding previous and current editors was obtained, compiled and analysed.

Results: Overall there have been 26 female editors and at least 128 male editors in the 25 dermatology journals, which means that less than 19% of editors-in-chief have been female. 45.8% of journals have not yet had a female editor. The percentage of female editors ranged from 0% to 100%, with only one journal having had all female editors (International Journal of Women's Dermatology). On average, the journals had female editorship for 27.2% of the total number of years in publication. Of the 13 journals that have had a female editor, 61.5% had their first female editor after the year 2000.

Discussion and Conclusion: There are various factors that influence these numbers including age of the journals and length of each editorship. It is clear that over time there has been an increase in the number of women holding these prestigious positions however gender equity has not yet been reached.

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Introduction

As the 21st century continues to move through its second decade, we consider it the norm for women to be prominent within the medical profession. It is easy to forget that only 50 years ago, very few women even attended medical school. For example, in the United States in 1965, only 6.9% of medical students who graduated were women. This number had increased to 47.5% in 2014 (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2016).

With a more proportionate number of female students who graduate, one would expect a similar increase over time in the number of women in leadership positions within the profession.

However, in academic medicine, there still exists a gender gap at the top level and currently only 21% of full-time medical professors and 16% of medical school deans in the United States are women (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2016). In addition to being an academic faculty member, there are alternative ways for women to contribute to academic medicine. It is important to investigate these options to gain a full picture of the influence and prevalence of women in the academic field.

One marker to measure influence is the membership of a journal editorial board or professional medical society board. A study in 2004 investigated 28 different specialties and compared the numbers of men and women on boards with the proportion of men and women who work within those specialties. In seven specialties, including dermatology, women were found to be significantly underrepresented on the boards (Morton and Sonnad, 2007). Other studies also confirmed that there has been an underrepresentation of women on the editorial boards of prominent medical journals (Amrein et al., 2011; Kennedy et al., 2001).

[☆] Conflicts of interest: Prof. Dedee Murrell is founding co-editor of the Intl J Women's Dermatology, an honorary position.

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Title	Current Publisher	Impact Factor	Associated Medical Society	Year of Founding	No of Female Editors-in-Chief	No of Male Editors-in-Chief	Percentage of Female Editors-in-Chief	Names of Female Editors-in-Chief	Year of First Female Editor-in-Chief	Percentage of Total Years under Female Editorship (%)
Annales de Dermatologie et de Venerologie	Elsevier	0.58	Société Française de Dermatologie, l'Association des Dermatologistes Francophones	1868	1	?	?	Béatrice Circkx (2004-2009)	2004	3.4
JAMA Dermatology (formerly Archives of Dermatology)	American Medical Association	5.0	American Medical Association	1882	1	18	5%	June Robinson (2004-present)	2004	9.0
British Journal of Dermatology	Wiley	4.31	British Association of Dermatologists	1888	2	25	7%	Rona MacKie (1985-1988) Tanya Bleiker (2010-2013)	1985	4.7
Acta Dermatovenerologica	Society for Publication of Acta Dermatovenerologica	3.67	European Society of Dermatology and Psychiatry, International Forum for the Study of Itch	1920	0	5	0	n/a	n/a	0
Journal of Investigative Dermatology	Elsevier	6.91	Society for Investigative Dermatology, European Society for Dermatological Research	1938	3	9	25%	Naomi Kanof (1949-1967) Ruth Freinkel (1977-1982) Barbara Gilchrest (2012-present)	1949	34.6
Australasian Journal of Dermatology	Wiley	1.30	Australasian College of Dermatologists, New Zealand Dermatological Society	1951	2	7	22%	Delywn Dyll Smith (1994-2008) Orli Wargon (2008-2013)	1994	29.2
International Journal of Dermatology	Wiley	1.41	International Society of Dermatology	1963	1	5	17%	Rokea el-Azhary (2013-present)	2014	5.7
Dermatologic Surgery	Wolters Kluwer Health	1.93	American Society for Dermatologic Surgery (ASDS), the American College of Mohs Surgery (ACMS), the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery (ISHRS), and the Dermatologic & Aesthetic Surgery International League (DASIL)	1975	0	7	0%	n/a	n/a	0
Clinical and Experimental Dermatology	Wiley	1.31	British Association of Dermatologists	1976	0	?	0%	n/a	n/a	0
Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology	Elsevier	4.44	American Academy of Dermatology	1979	0	4	0%	n/a	n/a	0
Clinics in Dermatology	Elsevier	2.36	International Academy of Cosmetic Dermatology	1983	0	1	0%	n/a	n/a	0
Dermatologic Clinics	Elsevier	1.87	None	1983	0	?	0%	Multiple guest editors, 23 of whom were women	n/a	0
Pediatric Dermatology	Wiley	1.16	The Society for Pediatric Dermatology, The European Society for Pediatric Dermatology, The International Society of Pediatric Dermatology, the Dutch/Belgian Pediatric Dermatology Society, The Latin American Pediatric Dermatology Society, and The Spanish Society of Pediatric Dermatology	1983	2	2	50%	Nancy Esterly (1983-2006) Ilona Frieden (2006-present)	1983	100
Pigment Cell and Melanoma Research	Wiley	4.16	International Federation of Pigment Cell Societies, Society for Melanoma Research	1987	0	8	0%	n/a	n/a	0
Journal of Dermatological Treatment	Taylor and Francis	1.85	none	1989	0	7	0%	n/a	n/a	0
European Journal of Dermatology	John Libbey Eurotext	2.06	European Dermatology Forum	1990	0	3	0%	n/a	n/a	0
Journal of Dermatological Science	Japan	3.73	Japanese Society for Investigative Dermatology	1990	0	6	0%	n/a	n/a	0
Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venerology	Wiley	3.02	European Academy of Dermatology and Venerology	1991	0	4	0%	n/a	n/a	0
Experimental Dermatology	Wiley	2.67	European Immunodermatology Society, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Dermatologische Forschung, European Hidradenitis Suppuritiva Foundation e.V., Hidradenitis Suppuritiva Foundation (USA) Inc.	1992	4	9	31%	Gunhild Lange-Skovgaard (1992-1995) Angela Christiano (1996-2007) Sabine Eming (2011-2015) Karin Loser (2015-date)	1992	79.2
Acta Dermatovenerologica Croatica	Croatian Dermatovenerological Society of Croatian Medical Association	0.46	Croatian Dermatovenerological Society	1993	2	1	67%	Jasna Lipoženić (2000-2012) Branka Marinović (2013-present)	2000	65.2
Dermatology Online Journal	California Digital Library		Department of Dermatology UC, Davis, Northern California Veterans Administration.	1995	1	2	33%	Barbara Burrall (2004-present)	2004	57.1
Dermatologic Therapy	Wiley	1.26	North American Clinical Dermatologic Society (NACDS)	2000	0	1	0%	n/a	n/a	0
Journal of Drugs in Dermatology		1.52	International Society of Dermatologic Surgery, Skin of Color Seminar Series and Orlando Dermatology Aesthetic and Clinical Conference	2002	4	3	57%	Elizabeth Hale (2004) Susan H Weinkle (2005-2008) Sherry H Hsiung (2008) Deborah S Sarnoff (2008-present)	2004	92.9
International Journal of Womens Dermatology	Elsevier		Women's Dermatologic Society	2015	2	0	100%	Jane Grant-Kels (2015-present) Dédé Murrell (2015-present)	2015	100
Skin Appendage Disorders	Karger		European Nail Society	2015	1	1	50%	Antonella Tosti (2015-present)	2015	100
					TOTAL: 26	TOTAL: 128	AVERAGE: 19%			AVERAGE: 27.2

Fig. 1. Table to show the gender distribution of current and former editors-in-chief of dermatology journals.

Another measure of influence is authorship of papers. Studies have shown that the number of female authors who are listed first and identified as senior in high impact dermatology journals has increased significantly over time (Feramisco et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2016).

A further marker of academic prowess is editorship of a scientific journal. The number of women who have held editor-in-chief positions with dermatology journals has not yet been studied. We chose to investigate this key area to build on the current knowledge base and further establish the role that women have so far played in the field of academic dermatology.

Aims

The aim of this study was to investigate the number of women who serve or have served as editors-in-chief for prominent international dermatology journals during the 20th and 21st centuries. A secondary aim was to assess whether there had been a change over time with regard to the number of female editors-in-chief.

Methods

We conducted a study of the gender distribution of editors-in-chief of 25 international dermatology journals. A list of 25 journals was collated on the basis of their impact factors and prominence. Each journal was contacted directly to obtain a list of past editors-in-chief and the years of their editorships. If no response was received, the data was extracted from the journal website. The information was then compiled and analyzed.

Results

Information was obtained for all 25 dermatology journals (Fig. 1). Three journals (*JAMA Dermatology*, *Journal of Drugs in Dermatology*, and *Dermatology Online Journal*) did not respond to direct communication but had sufficient information on their websites to be included in the study.

For the 25 journals studied, there have been 26 female editors-in-chief overall and at least 128 male editors-in-chief (ratio, 1:4.9). The number of male editors-in-chief stated is lower than the true number because three journals directly confirmed that they had not had a female editor-in-chief but were unable to supply a full list of male editors-in-chief. Therefore, the true percentage of female editors-in-chief overall is lower than 19%.

Thirteen journals currently have or have previously had a female editor-in-chief, which means that 45.8% of the journals that were investigated have had only male editors-in-chief. The percentage of female editors-in-chief at each journal ranged from 0 to 100%. The only journal with 100% female editorship was the *International Journal of Women's Dermatology*. The journals with the next highest percentages of female editors-in-chief were *Acta Dermatovenerologica Croatica* (67%) and the *Journal of Drugs in Dermatology* (57%).

Alternatively, when analyzing the total number of female editors-in-chief at each journal, two journals have had four female editors-in-chief. The *Journal of Drugs in Dermatology* has had four female editors-in-chief over 14 years and *Experimental Dermatology* has had the same number over 24 years. The *Journal of Investigative Dermatology* has had three female editors-in-chief over its 78 years of publication. There are also five journals that have had two female editors-in-chief. Across the 25 journals, the average percentage of years under female editorship was 27% with a range of 0 to 100%.

Of the 13 journals that have had female editors-in-chief, 61.5% had their first female editor-in-chief after the year 2000. Fifteen percent put their first female at the helm in the 1990s and another 15% in the 1980s. The only journal with a female editor-in-chief prior to the

1980s was the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology* with Dr. Naomi Kanof as editor as early as 1949.

Discussion

We examined each journal by analyzing both numbers and percentages of female editors-in-chief. It is important to consider both because the percentage of female editors-in-chief will be dependent on the age of the journal and the total number of editors-in-chief. For example, *Acta Dermatovenerologica Croatica* has had 67% female editors-in-chief overall with two female and one male editor-in-chief but the *Journal of Drugs in Dermatology* had a lower percentage overall (57%) with four female and three male editors-in-chief.

Without an accurate number of male editors-in-chief at each journal, an alternative objective way to assess the overall contribution of women was to consider the percentage of total years of publication with a female editor-in-chief for each journal. Two journals had achieved 100% of years with a female editor-in-chief but also had male editors-in-chief (*Skin Appendage Disorders* and *Pediatric Dermatology*) because they simultaneously had female and male editors-in-chief for some period of publication time.

Another important factor to note is the number of years that each editor-in-chief held office. On average, women spent 6.4 years as editor-in-chief. The longest running female editor-in-chief in our study was Dr. Nancy Esterly of *Pediatric Dermatology* who served for 23 years until 2006.

In the United States in 2010, 41.3% of active dermatologists were female (*Association of American Medical Colleges*, 2012). The number of journals that have not yet had a female editor-in-chief (45.8%) and the overall percentage of female editors-in-chief (<19%) show that there is a disparity between the proportion of women who work within the specialty and those who reach the top leadership position at journals. However, the fact that 10 journals have had their first female editor-in-chief since 1992 shows that change has occurred over the past 20 years and that more women are now appointed to these prestigious positions.

One limitation of this study is that it did not investigate all dermatology journals in publication. However, a sample of 25 journals is likely to give adequate data to draw conclusions. Furthermore, it is important to note that many of the journals that were investigated have had women on the editorial boards, independent of whether they have had a woman in the position of editor-in-chief. To assess the total number of women on journal editorial boards was beyond the scope of this study.

This study reinforces the results of previous studies that investigated the role of women in academic leadership positions within the fields of dermatology and academic medicine in general and shows that there has been movement toward gender parity. However, equity has not been reached yet. The reasons for this are complex and yet to be fully established.

Various methods have been suggested to encourage this trend of increasing the number of women in academic leadership positions including ensuring that women are consistently considered when commissioning invited articles in journals (Rochon et al., 2016) or more substantively, the Athena Swan Program in the United Kingdom. This program encourages and incentivizes institutions including universities and research facilities to promote the advancement of women who working in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine subjects (*Athena Swan Charter*, 2016).

Conclusion

Despite the limitations of this study, it does indicate that the number of women in editor-in-chief positions for dermatology journals is increasing over time. Other studies that investigated the number of

women in medical academic leadership positions support this conclusion and show similar trends. Further studies are needed to determine the factors and influences that help to promote women to top leadership positions. A greater understanding of this would allow for more focused support to help women achieve equality in this area.

Acknowledgment by Dédé Murrell

I came to know Jane Grant-Kels as a fellow board member of the Women's Dermatology Society and an editorial board member of the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*. When I suggested to the Women's Dermatology Society that we establish our own journal, some were skeptical about the proposal but Jane immediately saw the potential to further the academic reputation of the society. We later discovered while collaborating as co-editors that one of Jane's family members had attended the same school, Loomis Chaffee in Windsor, Connecticut, as I had, which I had been fortunate to attend on an English-speaking union scholarship for a year. Connecticut is a second home to me and I returned to work there for two summers while I was an undergraduate at Cambridge University, England, so I can understand exactly where she is coming from, her hard work ethic, dedication, and directness. It has been and is a great pleasure to work with Jane establishing the *International Journal of Women's Dermatology*.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijwd.2017.03.001>.

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