



LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Gender distribution among transplant journal editorial members: a call to empower women in academic medicine

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Dear Editors,

Although the transplantation community has seen an increase in the number of women transplant surgeons and physicians over the past decade, gender disparities persist particularly at higher academic ranks [1,2]. These imbalances extend into editorial boards and are well documented in multiple specialties throughout academia [3,4]. This has important implications given that editorial membership not only affords one the opportunity to shape the nature of published scholarly discourse of academic medicine, but also serves as an important consideration for many tenure committees in their decision to promote faculty. Consequently, implicit and explicit gender biases in the selection of editorial board members may perpetuate existing barriers for the promotion of women within transplantation [3,4]. Moreover, diversity in editorial boards is crucial to provide additional views and mitigate publication bias against women, ultimately improving the quality of published research [5,6]. Thus, this study sought to evaluate the gender composition of editorial positions across all transplantation journals and serve as a call to action to promote gender inclusivity in transplantation.

We identified 29 transplantation journals through the 2021 Scimago Journal & Country Rank (SJCR) and analyzed publicly available data using descriptive statistics and pooled proportions of women editorial board members and associate editors. Four independent authors cross-

referenced provided names against biography pronouns and captioned pictures of individuals to classify gender accurately. Journals were stratified by quartiles based on SJCR impact factor and compared using chi-square test. Statistical significance was considered for p -value < 0.05 .

In total, there were 2,030 editorial board members with 501 women (24.7%) and 1,529 men (75.3%). Across journal quartiles, the prevalence of women ranged from 23.7% (95% CI: 18.6%–29.7%; Q1 journals) to 9.86% (95% CI: 2.59% to 31.0%; N/A category). There was no significant difference across journal quartiles based on chi-square test ($P = 0.673$, Table 1). Of the 539 associate editors, there were 174 women (32.3%) and 365 men (67.7%). Across journal quartiles, the prevalence of women ranged from 34.3% (95% CI: 24.0%–46.4%; Q3 journals) to 13.9% (95% CI: 0.66% - 79.7%; N/A category). Similarly, no significant difference was observed between journal quartiles based on the chi-square test ($P = 0.527$, Table 1).

While temporal trend could not be examined, women were found to be a minority across editorial positions in transplantation journals regardless of quartile. Previous literature found that surgical journals had a lower mean proportion of women editorial board members and associate women editors at 18.3% and 20.1%, respectively [7]. Interestingly, women may be better represented in transplantation, a subspecialty under both medicine and surgery. Among all transplantation journals, Transplant International leads the way with a near-perfect gender balance in their editorial board [8]. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge the substantial underrepresentation of women and the multifactorial barriers into higher academia positions including gender-based discrimination, male-dominated culture, and lack of women mentors [9,10]. Beyond increasing the transparency of selection criteria of editorial board members and using objective tools including competitive and merit-based invitations, transplantation journals should actively connect qualified women faculty to available editorial board positions [11].

Table 1. Summary of results.

Quartile	Number of Journals	Sample Size	Women editorial board members (%)	Chi-square test*	Number of journals	Sample Size	Women associate editors (%)	Chi-square test*
Q1	6	519	23.7 (95% CI: 18.6–29.7)	0.673	5	170	23.5 (95% CI: 17.8–30.5)	0.527
Q2	6	519	19.6 (95% CI: 10.2–34.3)		5	165	26.9 (95% CI: 7.61–62.1)	
Q3	6	354	22.9 (95% CI: 13.2–36.7)		5	67	34.3 (95% CI: 24.0–46.4)	
Q4	7	428	20.3 (95% CI: 10.8–34.7)		4	34	20.4 (95% CI: 2.64–70.6)	
N/A	4	210	9.86 (95% CI: 2.59–31.0)		2	103	13.9 (95% CI: 0.66–79.7)	

* P -value<0.05 is significant.

Provision of more opportunities in ad hoc reviewer roles may also build a pipeline of future women editors and mentors for younger female protégés [12].

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Author contributions

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