



## Research Letter

## Gender and rank salary trends among academic dermatologists

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Dear Editor,

Gender disparity in salary and representation is a major ongoing issue in academic medicine (Roy, 2018; Weeks and Wallace, 2007). Although women composed almost half (47.9%) of dermatologists in Canada and the United States in 2018, they earned a 28% lower median salary than men, and only 26.1% of chiefs/chairs were women (Shah et al., 2018; Weeks and Wallace, 2007). Herein, we aim to analyze the most updated salary gaps between gender across ranks among academic dermatologists in the United States between 2013 and 2018.

Dermatology salary data from 2013 through 2018 were obtained from the Association of American Medical Colleges' (AAMC) Faculty Salary Survey (FSS; AAMC, 2019). The reported salaries included fixed/contractual salaries, medical practice supplement, bonus/incentive pay, and uncontrolled outside earnings, and excluded fringe benefits. According to the AAMC's website, the description for the calculation of salaries is as follows: "Total compensation includes fixed/contractual salary, medical practice, supplement, bonus/incentive pay, and uncontrolled outside earnings and excludes fringe benefits" (AAMC, 2019).

The FSS data reported mean and median salaries for male and female dermatology faculty across six academic ranks: instructor (n = 363), assistant professor (n = 2361), associate professor (n = 1078), professor (n = 1003), chief (n = 149), and chair (n = 27). A significant salary gap was observed between male and female faculty over the 2013–2018 period (Fig. 1). In 2013, female dermatologists earned a combined average median salary of \$269,510 whereas men earned \$354,590, representing a 31.57% difference. In 2018, women earned an average of \$323,110 whereas men earned \$387,330, representing a 19.88% difference. Men continued to earn more, but women saw a higher percentage salary growth (+19.89% vs. +9.23%) from 2013 to 2018, which has led to a narrowing of the gender gap over the 5-year span (Fig. 2A).

Over the 2013–2018 period (Fig. 2A), instructors had the highest median salary growth rate (+25.80%), followed by chair (+19.07%), chief (+15.65%), assistant professor (+12.17%), professor (+11.20%), and associate professor (+3.96%).

Disparities are noted in the gender distribution across faculty ranks over the 2013–2018 period (Fig. 2B). Female academic dermatologists were a larger proportion of faculty in the lower ranks: instructor (66.43%) and assistant professor (60.66%). Men had increased representation among the top 3 ranks: chair (75.42%), professor (67.50%), and chief (53.96%). In 2018, men earned a higher median salary than their female counterparts throughout all faculty ranks except instructor (assistant professors: +16.15%, associate professors: +21.18%, professors: +6.79%, chiefs: +0.51%, chairs: +9.65%).

Our results corroborate previous findings highlighting the gender salary gap within dermatology (Roy, 2018; Weeks and Wallace, 2007). However, there appears to be a trend toward closing this gap: The overall median salary for women over this 5-year period increased by almost 20% but only increased by around 9% for men. Our study also highlights the need to improve gender diversity at higher academic ranks. Potential avenues include mentorship of junior female faculty members through institutional faculty mentorship programs and through conferences such as the AAMC early career and mid-career women faculty leadership seminars (Helitzer et al., 2014).

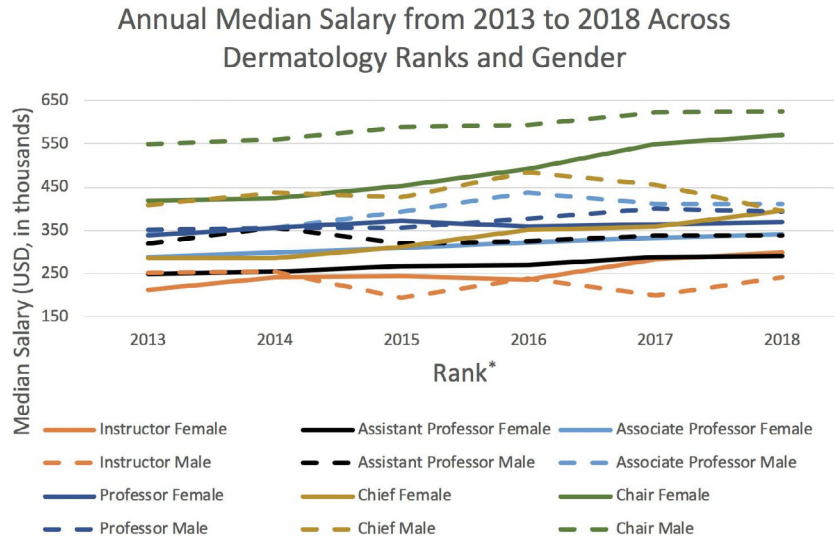
There may be several reasons for the existing gender salary gap, including delayed academic promotion and increase in compensation for women due to childbearing and childrearing responsibilities, a higher proportion of men being in leadership positions historically, and women being less likely to have full full-time equivalent faculty appointments.

The limitation to our study is the use of FSS data, which do not consider faculty salary based on full-time equivalent, geographic influences, clinical versus nonclinical faculty, and academic tracks (e.g., tenure, scientist). In addition, FSS rank categorization may not represent institutions that start with clinical instructor rather than assistant professor rank.

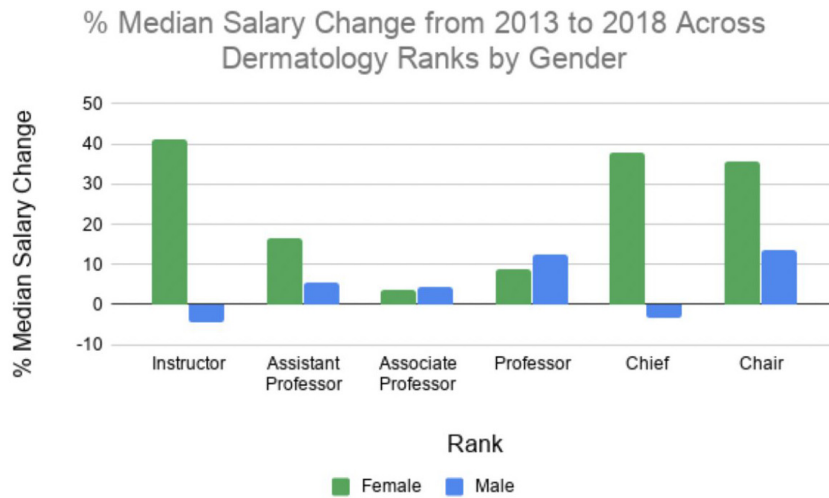
Further studies that incorporate the aforementioned factors conducted over a longer time period are needed to determine the magnitude of the salary gap issue. Dedicated efforts on individual, employer, and sociopolitical levels are required to narrow gender gaps in salary and gender representation across academic ranks to optimize compensation equity.

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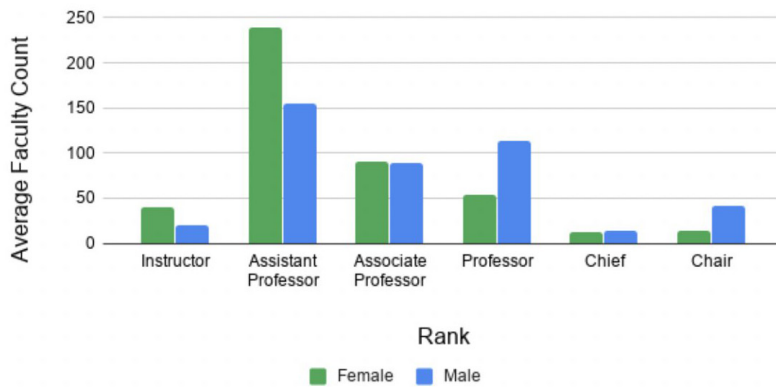
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**Fig. 1.** Annual median salary across ranks and gender from 2013 to 2018. \*If a faculty member held more than one rank (e.g., associate professor and chair), only the highest held rank was reported (i.e., chair).



### Average Faculty Gender Distribution Within Academic Ranks Over the 2013–2018 Period



**Fig. 2.** (A) Percentage median salary change by rank and gender from 2013 to 2018 and (B) average faculty gender distribution over the 2013–2018 period.

**Conflict of Interest**

None.

**Funding**

None.

**Study Approval**

NA.

**Financial Disclosures**

None.

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