

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Gender distribution in presidents and board members of European nephrology societies

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There is a known gender gap in leadership positions in health-care [1–3]. Women are also underrepresented in boards of national medicine societies worldwide and in editorial boards of emergency medicine journals [1–3].

In nephrology, data on gender distribution in academic or leadership positions are scarce. Stevens *et al.* [4] summarized the evolution of gender disparity in nephrology. While the European Renal Association (ERA) was never presided by a woman, different gender distribution was mentioned for the American Society of Nephrology, where several women presidents were elected and the number of women in councillor and committee chair positions was higher [4–6]. In the present work, we investigated gender distribution in all boards of national nephrology societies in association with the ERA. Additionally, gender distribution in nephrology societies was compared with the proportion of women working as general physicians or nephrologists in Europe in order to investigate whether women were truly underrepresented compared with the female workforce.

A cross-sectional analysis of gender distribution in boards and presidents of national nephrology societies that were full members of the ERA was performed. Information concerning European nephrology societies was obtained from the ERA homepage [7]. Identification of board members was based on the information provided on the society or ERA homepage. The respective board members were categorized as president or non-presidential board members. Former or honored presidents or members were not included in our study. For reasons of simplicity, gender was categorized in ‘man’, ‘woman’ or ‘unknown’ as described in our previous works [1–3]. Results from nephrology societies were compared with the European societies of internal and emergency medicine, data that were recently

published by our group [1, 2]. Furthermore, these results were compared with gender distribution in the total physician and nephrologist workforce. Unfortunately, in Europe, data were only accessible for Switzerland, Germany and Austria [8–10]. Information for gender distribution of European nephrologists was obtained from the homepage/reports of the national medical associations [9, 10].

A total of 39 societies from 38 European nations were included in our analysis. Four nations did not provide a homepage (Ireland, Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia). For the Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was information about the president but no information about the board members available. In total, 21 men (55%) and 17 women (45%) were presidents. Concerning the remaining 426 non-presidential board members, 270 were men (63%) (Figure 1). Compared with the European emergency and with the European internal medicine societies, significantly more women were presidents of European nephrology societies. Regarding board members, the nephrology societies count a similar proportion of women compared with the European emergency medicine societies, but more than the European medicine societies (Figure 1). Gender distribution for physicians in the examined European countries is balanced (proportion of men 51.4%) [8]. A major point of interest would be the gender balance in nephrologists younger than 45 years old. Unfortunately, data to answer this point were not available. To investigate the representation of the female nephrologist workforce in national nephrology societies, the gender distribution in Swiss (proportion of men 59.7%), German (proportion of men 70.9%) and Austrian nephrologists (proportion of men 64%) was obtained [9, 10]. The results of this comparison show a higher rate of women in nephrology than published [6].

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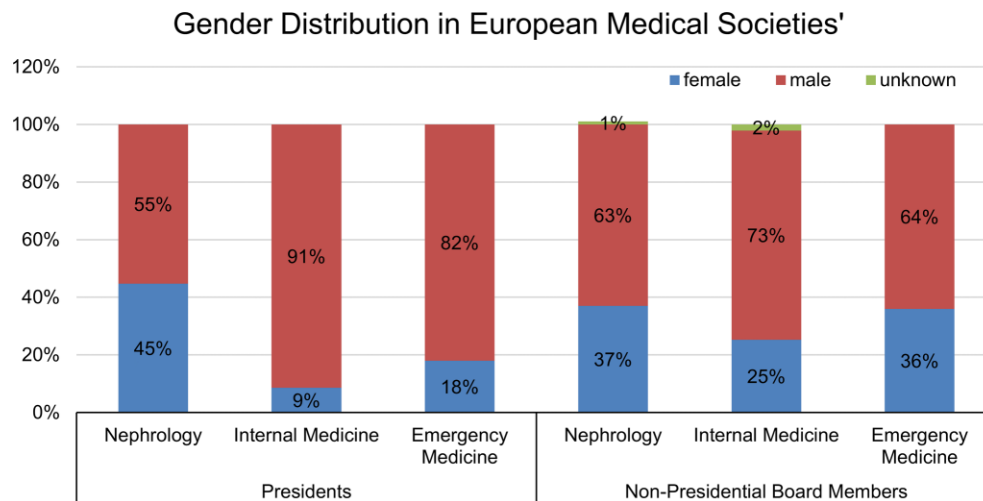


FIGURE 1: Gender distribution in European medical societies.

In conclusion, our findings show that the gender distribution in board members of the European nephrology societies seems to reflect the gender distribution among European nephrologists.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None declared.

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