



## Invited Commentary

## Invited commentary for: Gender differences in urology society award recipients



Dr. Rena Malik and her group at the University of Maryland reported their results of gender trends in urologic society awardees in the past several decades, depending on years of data available from each society.<sup>1</sup> They queried public websites for information about awards and awardees. The authors found an increasing trend of women awardees from urology societies, though the frequency and proportions varied markedly by society.

These data are interesting and support trends of women's increased participation in surgery and urology. Women comprise 8.7% of practicing urologists, but represented 16.7% of first-time certifying urologists, demonstrating clear growth in the field.<sup>2</sup> In fact, women are gaining subspecialization at higher rates than men in both female urology and pediatric urology, and women urologists certifying for the first time are nearly twice as likely to practice in academia than their male colleagues.<sup>2</sup> Given these gains, this article makes the convincing claim that female awardees have not kept pace with female participation in the specialty. These findings are consistent with the gender gap that has been demonstrated in other areas of surgery, such as representation of women in speaking roles at surgical conferences,<sup>3</sup> clinical practice groups for emergency surgery,<sup>4</sup> and, in a recent study of the American Urologic Association, plenary panel speakers.<sup>5</sup>

Like many strong studies, this work leads to further questions and suggestions for change. For example, gender distribution among the societies was unknown, so the pool of potential female award recipients may be limited. Feedback to these organizations and designated outreach efforts may improve participation. Further, women surgeons have identified ineffective mentorship as a significant barrier to advancement in academic surgery.<sup>6</sup> Targeted educational efforts to mentors and society leaders may help combat implicit gender bias. Second, the increasing number of female awardees, while positive, may reflect early career awards. It will be important to trend the overall numbers of awards, as well

as award types, to help identify the possibility of implicit gender bias within specific societies. Finally, in the most recent years queried, there appeared to be a flattening of the curve; this indicates that individual societies should critically scrutinize their award selection criteria to ensure consistency and limit bias.

In summary, the authors should be congratulated for their informative and thought-provoking contribution to the field.

## References

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