Exploring Diversity in Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Journal Editorial Boards: Gender and Visible Minority Representation

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Background
- Despite increasing diversity in medical school entrants, disparities exist in academic leadership.
- This study sought to examine the proportion of women and visible minorities (VMs) among editorial board members (EBMs) of otorhinolaryngology journals.

Methods
- Two reviewers collected journal, EBM, and editor-in-chief characteristics using journal mastheads or official websites.
- Gender and VM representation on editorial boards and factors associated with increased representation were investigated.

Results
- 41 journals were explored January-April 2022
- Of 2128 EBMs, 663 (31.3%) were visible minorities (VMs) and 551 (25.9%) were female.
- Editor-in-chief roles were held by 12 (25%) VMs and 3 (6.2%) women.
- Women had higher representation as associate editors (24.5% vs 15.4%) and deputy/managing editors (2.2% vs 0.4%), while men were more represented as editor-in-chief (2.9% vs. 0.5%) (p < 0.001). Similar VM representation existed between genders (31.0% male; 31.6% female).
- A higher proportion of women were represented in the 1st journal impact factor quartile (27.0% vs 24.5%) and 4th quartile (12.0% vs 4.9%) (p < 0.001). No significant factors were identified for higher female editorial board representation.
- Larger editorial board size (p = 0.002) and Asian/South American journals (p = 0.003 to p < 0.001) had significantly higher representation of VMs.

Discussion/Conclusion
- Women and VMs are under-represented in high-ranking editorial positions
- A common theme exists across academic journals in medicine with male and Euro-North-American predominance
- A lack of representation in editorial boards has implications for the dissemination of novel research
- An imbalance in publication equity detracts from constructing a global perspective on research advancements
- Possible solutions: editorial term limits, merit-based performance reviews, initiatives to increase female membership and authorship such as the #LancetWomen project of 2017 which helped reach editorial board gender parity
- Diversity in editorial boards is needed to ensure fair and balanced journal reviews, and equity within our specialty

References