

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MEDICAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AT AN ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTER



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BACKGROUND

Women are generally underrepresented in medical leadership positions, making gender equity an area of focus. Despite women making up nearly half of medical school graduates, women in academic medicine are less commonly full-time faculty members and advanced to higher positions less frequently. For example, a 2018-2019 AAMC report noted only 18% of medical department chairs were held by women. Absence of women in medical leadership has the potential to diminish research, medical training, and policy decisions benefitting women's health. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the amount of funded leadership positions held by women in each clinical and science department at an academic medical center.

METHODS

We surveyed 22 clinical departments, 14 clinical department sections, and 9 science departments at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist, questioning which funded leadership roles, if any, were held by women. Leadership positions included department chair, vice chair, residency director, fellowship director, clerkship director, or section head. Responses only included the number of leadership positions held by women per category and did not include the total number of positions available.

RESULTS

22.7% (5/22) of clinical department chairs and 55.5% (5/9) of science department chairs are currently held by women. Vice chair position is held by women in 31.8% (7/22) of clinical department positions and 11.1% (1/9) in the science departments. Twenty-nine medical departments and sections reported having a residency program, of which 55% report having a woman residency director. 66% of the medical and science departments that offer a fellowship program (20/30) report having at least one woman fellowship director. Additionally, 25% of departments with fellowships (5/20) have two or more women holding fellowship director positions. Although the total number of section chairs could not be calculated per department, 50% of clinical departments surveyed (11/22) reported having at least one woman section head. Our survey was limited in that we could not determine the percentage of inter-departmental gender representation for most groups and assume there is variability depending on the medical specialty. For example, one department reported having 5 section head positions, each held by women faculty, whereas another department with 8 section head positions reported only one position held by a woman. Three clinical departments (3/22, 13.6%) and two medical sections (2/14, 14.3%) reported having no women in the listed leadership positions at this time.

% LEADERSHIP POSITIONS HELD BY WOMEN		
LEADERSHIP ROLE	# WOMEN IN POSITION / TOTAL	PERCENT
Department Chair: Clinical	5 / 22	22.7%
Department Chair: Science	5 / 9	55.5%
Vice Chair: Clinical	7 / 22	31.8%
Vice Chair: Science	1 / 9	11.1%
Residency Director	16 / 29	55%

CONCLUSION

Overall, we are encouraged by the distribution of women in leadership in the clinical and science departments, especially regarding residency and fellowship director positions, although more work should be done to encourage women's representation to some degree in every medical department. Diversity in medical leadership is critically important when training the next generation of physicians and researchers to understand and advocate for women's health.

Supported by:

AAMC. The State of Women in Academic Medicine: Exploring Pathways to Equity. <https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/data/2018-2019-state-women-academic-medicine-exploring-pathways-equity>
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