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Gender disparities in course speakers at the AAN Annual Meeting

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Gender equality is a topic of national interest. Recent publications highlight the underrepresentation of women in high impact journal authorship and American Academy of Neurology (AAN) recognition awards. We examined gender differences in course speakers and directors at the AAN Annual Meeting (AANAM) from 2014 -2018. A retrospective analysis of conference data was examined. The names of speakers and directors for all courses offered were reviewed from the 2014-2018 AANAM programs. Gender was determined by name inspection and internet search. Total active and academic neurologists in 2015 were used as controls. AAMC reports this data bi-annually; 2017 data is not yet available. Proportion of male and female active neurologists, academic neurologists, course directors, and course speakers were compared via Chi Square. In 2015, 37.4% of academic neurologists were female, compared to 28.1% of active neurologists ($p < 0.00001$). With the exception of 2016-2017, there was no difference in speaker distribution compared to active neurologists (2016, 32.3%F vs 28.1%F, $p = 0.02$; 2017, 31.5%F vs 28.1%F $p < 0.05$). However, compared to the proportion of women in academic neurology, there were fewer women speakers (2014, 25.4% vs 37.4% $p < 0.00001$; 2015, 29.1% vs 37.4% $p = 0.00002$; 2016, 32.3% vs 37.4% $p < 0.009$; 2017, 31.5% vs 37.4% $p = 0.002$; 2018, 31.1% vs 37.4% $p < 0.002$) and fewer women directors, except in 2016 (2014, 26.7% vs 37.4% $p = 0.001$; 2015, 30.1% vs 37.4% $p = 0.031$; 2017, 29.8% vs 37.4% $p = 0.009$, 2018 data not available). Female neurologists are underrepresented as speakers and directors for courses at the AANAM compared to demographics in academic neurology, a group typically considered content experts given their involvement in research and guideline development. Such opportunities can play a role in career progression, particularly in academia. While this trend seems to be decreasing over time, the program committee may wish to consider additional strategies to narrow this gap.