Correspondence to ‘Gender gap in rheumatology: speaker representation at annual conferences’ by Monga and Liew—gender discrepancies at annual EULAR congresses: towards the gap narrowing

We read with interest the letter entitled ‘Gender gap in rheumatology: speaker representation at annual conferences’ by Kanika Monga and Jean Liew published in the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases.*

The authors highlight the issue of a gender gap among speakers and moderators at the academic conferences investigating female representation at the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) in 2017 and 2018. Overall, the proportion of female speakers and moderators was 42.8%–47% and the gap was higher in the clinic sessions presentations compared with basic science ones (45.8% vs 40.5%). The highest proportion of female representation was detected in Alliance for Human Research Protection sessions (65.3%), and the lowest in Meet the Professors and workshop sessions (34.4% and 28.7%). Indeed, the gender gap was narrower as compared with other conferences. Recently, European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) established a task force on gender equity in rheumatology with the aim of developing a comprehensive intervention on gender equity.

We aimed at evaluating the gender gap in the EULAR meetings held in 2018 and 2019. Using the EULAR scientific programme, we determined the proportion of women for each session: invited speakers, abstract presenters selected by the congress scientific committee and moderators. We further categorised the prevalence according to the type of session: general session, people with arthritis and rheumatism (PARE) and health professionals in rheumatology (other than physicians, HRP).

Overall, 895 presentations were performed in 2018 (276 invited speakers and 619 selected abstract) requiring 462 moderations. Female prevalence was 44% among moderators, 31.5% among invited speakers and 52.1% among selected abstract. In 2019, there were 811 presentations (185 invited speakers and 626 selected abstract) and 422 moderations. Overall, the prevalence of female representation in 2019 among the moderators was significantly higher compared with that in 2018 (48.6% vs 44%, p=0.02).

In 2019, there was an increase in the female prevalence among the invited speakers compared with the previous year (43.2% vs 31.5%, p=0.03) while the selected abstracts were equally distributed between male and female speakers both in 2018 and 2019 (percentage of females =52.1% and 48.4%, respectively).

We also stratified female prevalence in 2018 and 2019 EULAR congress according to the type of session (figure 1): in 2018, the lowest female prevalence was recorded in the general scientific session (40.5% moderators, 30.5% invited speakers and 46.2% selected abstract) and the highest prevalence in PARE (63.9% moderators, 59.4% invited speakers and 69.3% selected abstract). Moreover, in the general sessions, the prevalence of female presenting invited speeches was significantly lower than that of selected abstracts presenters (p=0.003). The results recorded in the general scientific session of the 2019 EULAR congress showed 44.5% of female prevalence among the moderators, 31.7% among the invited speakers and 42.3% among the selected oral communications. Like in 2018, the highest prevalence of female representation was registered in the PARE and HRP sessions: moderators were present in 56.8% and 68%, respectively; invited speakers in 57.8% and 56.4%; selected abstracts in 73.8% and 64.2%.

These results are similar to that observed in ACR meetings by Monga K. We also highlight that female gender in EULAR congresses is mostly represented in PARE and HRP sessions which account only for the 24.3%–28.3% of presentations and 19.5%–22.3% of moderations in 2018–2019. The women representation in PARE and HRP sessions reflects the gender bias characterising autoimmune diseases and the female predominance among health professionals; on the contrary, women are still under-represented in academic rheumatology.

The recent increase in proportion of females attending medical schools will, hopefully, further reduce the academic gender gap.

Paola Conigliaro 1, Silvia Laura Bosello, 2 Cristina Iannuccelli, 3 Elisa Gremese 4, Francesca Romana Spinelli 1,2 Marta Vadacca, 5 Maria Sole Chimenti 1

1 Department of “Medicina dei Sistemi”, Rheumatology, Allergology and Clinical Immunology, Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata, Rome, Italy
2 Division of Rheumatology, Fondazione PoliClinico Universitario A. Gemelli IRCCS, Rome, Italy
3 Department of “Scienze Cliniche, Internistiche, Anestesiologiche e Cardiovascolari” - Rheumatology Unit, Sapienza Università di Roma, Rome, Italy
4 Institute of Rheumatology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Rome, Italy
5 Unit of Allergology, Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology, Università Campus Bio-Medico di Roma, Rome, Italy

Correspondence to Dr Francesca Romana Spinelli, Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, Roma 00161, Italy; francescrasomana.spinelli@unisrome.it

Contributors PC conceived the work and drafted the letter. All authors collected and analysed the data, revised the letter and approved the final version.

Funding The authors have not declared a specific grant for this research from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Competing interests None declared.

Patient and public involvement Patients and/or the public were not involved in the design, conduct, or reporting, or dissemination plans of this research.

Patient consent for publication Not required.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; internally peer reviewed.

© Author(s) (or their employer(s)) 2020. No commercial re-use. See rights and permissions. Published by BMJ.


Received 7 July 2020
Revised 11 July 2020
Accepted 15 July 2020

Figure 1 Prevalence of female presentations in 2018 and 2019 European League Against Rheumatism meetings. EULAR, European league against rheumatism; PARE, people with arthritis and rheumatism (PARE); HRP, health professionals in rheumatology.
Correspondence

ORCID IDs
Paola Conigliaro http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7905-8413
Elisa Gremese http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2248-1058
Francesca Romana Spinelli http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1969-2097

REFERENCES