

Representation of Women Among Authors in Dermatitis and Presenters at American Contact Dermatitis Society Annual Meetings: A Look Over 24 Years

To the Editor:

The percentage of board-certified female dermatologists has increased steadily for the past 23 years, from 28.6% in 1995 to 52.5% in 2017.¹ In that same period, female representation

among speakers at annual dermatology meetings has increased,^{2,3} whereas female authorship in prestigious general dermatology journals—particularly as senior authors—has lagged behind.^{4,5} We sought to complete a subspecialty analysis of female representation in the American contact dermatitis research.

The genders of first, last (“senior”), and solo authors of meeting abstracts and journal articles (“studies” and “original articles”) from 24 American Contact Dermatitis Society (ACDS) annual meetings and 118 *Dermatitis* and *American Journal of Contact Dermatitis* issues between 1995 and 2018 were manually recorded. Similarly, genders of Fisher lecturers from the ACDS

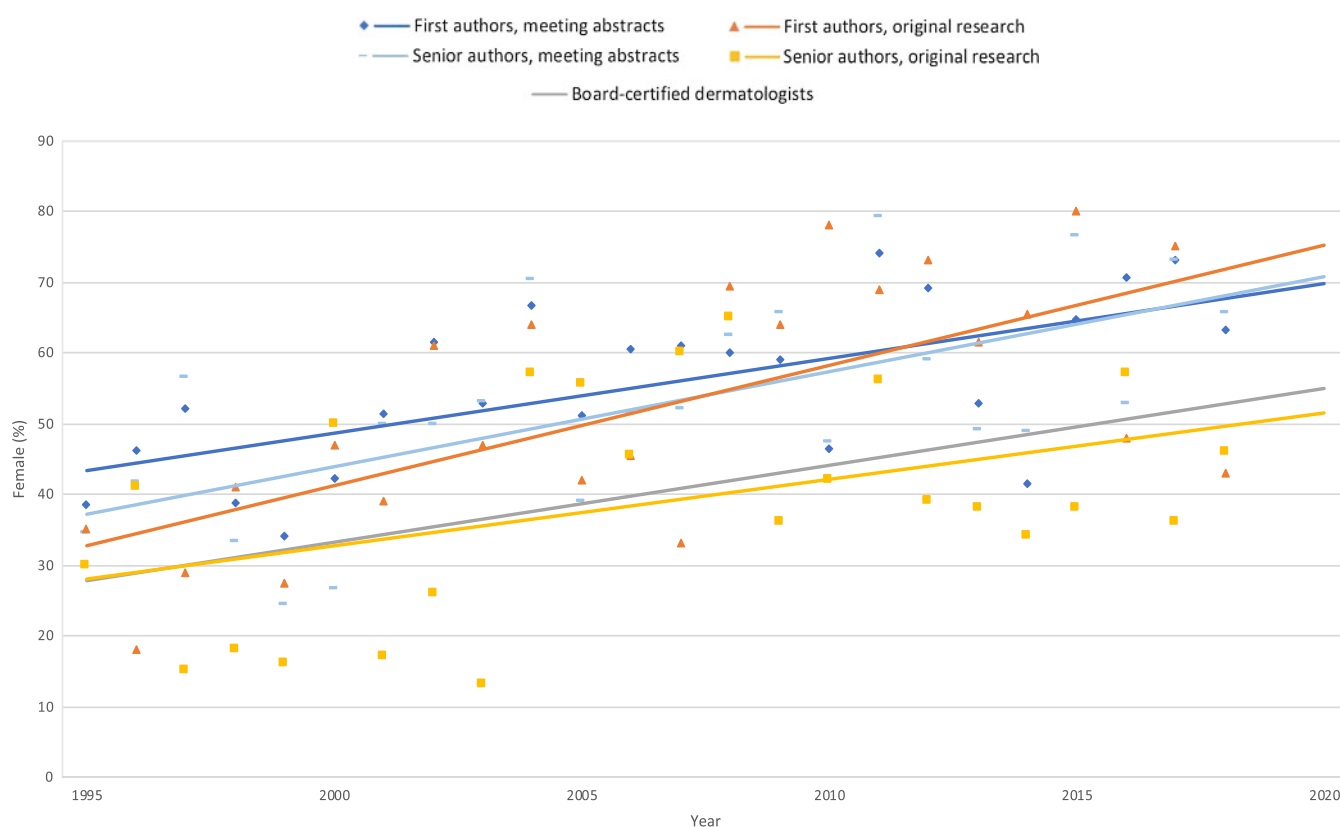


Figure 1. Female authorship of *American Journal of Contact Dermatitis/Dermatitis* original articles and ACDS annual meeting abstracts compared with board-certified women in dermatology over time. Author counts collected from published journal articles and abstracts. Female board-certified dermatologists' data retrieved from American Medical Association.¹

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C.B., C.R.H., and D.D. had full access to all of data in the study and take responsibility for the integrity of the data and the accuracy of the data analysis. C.R.H. and K.A.Z. did the study concept and design. C.B. and D.D. performed the statistical analysis. All authors did the acquisition, analysis, and interpretation of data; drafting of the manuscript; critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content; and study supervision.

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annual meetings between 1997 and 2018 were recorded. Gender was coded binary, as male or female, based on name assessment and Internet search. Authors whose gender could not be determined were excluded. Solo authors were counted as both first and senior authors for analysis. Data were entered in Excel software 16.23 (Microsoft, Redmond, WA), and descriptive analyses were performed. Cochran-Armitage trend tests were performed to assess significance of trends in female authorship over time.

TABLE 1. Percentage of Females as Authors of *American Journal of Contact Dermatitis/Dermatitis* Original Research Articles, Authors of ACDS Annual Meeting Abstracts, and ACDS Meeting Fisher Lecturers

	Years					P*
	1995–1999	2000–2004	2005–2009	2010–2014	2015–2018	
Original research, mean (SD), %						
First author	24 (11.2)	32.6 (19.8)	52.6 (11.6)	41.8 (8.4)	43.5 (9.5)	<0.0001
Senior author	30.1 (8.6)	51.6 (10.5)	50.8 (15.4)	69.4 (6.4)	62.3 (17.8)	0.001
Total female†	30.4 (3.9)	42.4 (13.5)	52 (8.6)	55.3 (5.3)	52.4 (6.8)	<0.0001
Abstracts, mean (SD), %						
First author	41.9 (7.2)	54.9 (9.5)	58.3 (4.1)	56.8 (14.2)	67.9 (4.8)	<0.0001
Senior author	38.1 (12)	50.0 (15.6)	54.2 (10.6)	56.7 (13.4)	67.1 (10.5)	<0.0001
Total female†	39.8 (8.7)	53.7 (12.7)	57.3 (8.5)	58 (12.8)	68.4 (5.4)	<0.0001
Fisher lecture, n (%)	0 (0)‡	1 (20)	1 (20)	1 (20)	1 (25)	NA

*P value is Cochran-Armitage test for trend.

†Total first, senior, and solo authors.

‡Fisher lecturers recorded from 1997 to 2018.

From 1995 to 2018, 847 ACDS annual meeting abstracts and 524 *Dermatitis/American Journal of Contact Dermatitis* articles were available. Gender could not be ascertained for 24 abstract authors and 20 authors of original articles. Overall, the percentage of women among first and senior authors for both abstracts and journal articles increased significantly for this period (P for trend < 0.0001) (Fig. 1; Table 1). Between 1997 and 2018, there have been 21 Fisher lecturers at the ACDS annual meetings. Of these 21, 4 (19%) have been female, with only 3 female Fisher lecturers since 2005.

These results demonstrate increased representation of women among first and senior authors of ACDS meeting abstracts and *Dermatitis* articles over time. Interestingly, the rate of female authorship in the area of contact dermatitis frequently exceeds what would be expected based on the percentage of female board-certified dermatologists (Fig. 1). Similar to other dermatology journals,^{4,5} female first authorship seems to be rising at a higher rate when compared with female senior authorship, perhaps reflecting a discrepancy of women in more senior academic/research positions. In addition, the rate of female authorship overall—particularly for original articles—seems to have reached a plateau in the last 5 years. Our methodology did not allow for data collection on nonbinary genders, a clear limitation, and we note that assessing gender based on name may not be universally accurate.

Despite the increased representation of females in contact dermatitis research over the years, very few women have been Fisher lecturers at the ACDS annual meeting. This is somewhat understandable, because the Fisher lectureship represents a lifetime achievement award and ostensibly reflects a gender distribution of key opinion leaders in contact dermatitis decades ago, and not today. Nevertheless, this underrepresentation of women among Fisher lecturers indicates a potential area for improvement in gender equality in the American contact dermatitis community.

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