

New study finds less research being published by female radiologists

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A new study has found that although radiology research by women has increased significantly over the past five decades, the rate of this increase has leveled off since 2000.

"This is both a positive and a negative result," says Erin O'Connor, MD, assistant professor of diagnostic [radiology](#) and nuclear medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM), and the lead author of the paper. "The good news is that radiology publications by female researchers are much more common than they were in 1970. But at the same time, these increases seem to be flattening to a certain extent."

The paper was published recently in the journal *Academic Radiology*.

Dr. O'Connor and her colleagues focused on authorship between 1970 and 2016. They examined articles in two key radiology journals, *Radiology* and the *American Journal of Radiology*, looking at the gender of the first, corresponding and last authors.

The generally accepted practice is that the first author is the scientist who contributed most to the work. Typically, the senior researcher is listed last, and the corresponding author has developed the overall design of the study.

First authorship among females in Radiology demonstrated a 31 percent increase from 1970 to 2016; female corresponding authors showed a

16.5 percent increase from 1980 to 2016; and female senior authors demonstrated a 16.5 percent increase from 1970 to 2016. The percentage of female first authors in AJR demonstrated a 32.2 percent increase from 1970 to 2016, female corresponding authors demonstrated a 24.3 percent increase from 1970 to 2016 and senior female authors demonstrated a 13.5 percent increase from 1970 to 2016. (Do you have combined rates of increase?)

Overall, during the 46 years, 23.5 percent of first authors were female, 22.2 percent of corresponding authors were female, and 15.2 percent of last authors were female.

After 2000 however, the rate of increase in female first and corresponding authorship decreased by 47 percent. In contrast, the proportion of female last authorship continued to increase at the rate that it had since 1970.

Dr. O'Connor theorizes that the decrease in academic productivity may be related to reductions in the growth of female radiology faculty and trainees. She argues that more should be done to encourage women to pursue careers in academic radiology.

Women remain underrepresented at the associate professor and professor ranks and in upper level radiology department administration.

The proportion of female radiology faculty, radiology trainees and graduating medical students substantially increased from 1970 to 2016. The percent of women holding full-time radiology faculty positions rose from 8.6 percent in 1970 to 30.2 percent in 2016. Female radiology trainees increased from 19.2 percent in 1980 to 26.7 percent in 2015. Overall, female medical student proportions rose much more rapidly, from nine percent in 1970 to nearly 48 percent in 2016.

"Gender equity in academic medical research is deeply important topic," said E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA, University Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs and the John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor and Dean, University of Maryland School of Medicine. "This new paper from Dr. O'Connor and her colleagues shows that we must keep working to ensure that female scientists continue to do more in all areas of academic medicine and research."

Provided by University of Maryland School of Medicine

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