

Representation of Female in the Editorial Boards of Indian Biomedical Journals

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This communication is an attempt to highlight the representation of females in Indian Biomedical Journals. Majority of the biomedical journals from India is dominated by Male Editorship only three journals are represented by Female as Chief Editor. Out of total 1733 Editorial and Advisory Board Members, 455 (26.3%) Board members are female.

Keywords: *Female Representation, India, Biomedical, Gender Equality*

Gender equality is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations which mandates to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. It also highlights that at the current rate it will take at least 140 years to achieve equal representation in leadership in the workplace¹ ([Goal 5 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#) accessed on 07.06.2025). Gender representation in academia and research has been a matter of debate in recent times, as it also reflects upon the issues of gender equity in academia and research. Inclusion of female members in the Editorial Boards of primary research journals highlights the national prominence in its field. It also helps in advancing women academically and boost chances of article acceptance written by women². Women in the Editorial Board also ensure publications related to issues with women in medicine³. Women are estimated to make up to 30% of doctors and more than 80% of nurses and midwives⁴.

Globally, women make up 67.2% of the health and social care workforce⁵, yet they occupy only 25% of senior positions and a mere 5% of leadership roles in the healthcare sector worldwide⁶. In India, although women account for 29% of medical doctors and 80% of nursing staff, they hold merely 18% of leadership positions, earning 34% less than their male counterparts⁷.

(<https://www.dasra.org/pdf/resources/An%20Unbalanced%20Scale%20-%20final.pdf> accessed on 07.06.2025). Earlier studies on female representation highlights that in US surgical journals females are underrepresented in the Editorial Boards comprising only 14.8%

of Members, 13.3% of Associate Editors, and 4.8% of Editors-in-Chief⁸.

Similar studies report Women's underrepresentation in various medical specialties, including psychiatry⁹, radiology¹⁰, paediatric journals¹¹, emergency medicine journals¹², plastic surgery society leadership¹³, international urology journals¹⁴, and leading ophthalmology journals¹⁵. Cross-sectional analysis of Editorial Board gender composition in 10 high-impact general surgery journals for year 1997, 2007, and 2017 indicated that the proportion of women has increased from 5% to 19% over 20 years¹⁶. The study found pervasive gender bias in the Editorial Boards of biodiversity conservation journals, with only 28.7% of editors being women. Gender biases are decreasing over time, with projections indicating potential gender balance by 2038¹⁷. The representation of women in the Editorial Boards of spine, neurosurgery, and orthopedic journals is very low, with an overall percentage of 8.84%. Women are least represented in spine journals at 5.53%, followed by neurosurgery at 8.58%, and orthopedic journals at 10.77%. The likelihood of having female members is higher in orthopedic journals compared to spine journals, with only 5.4% of Editors-in-Chief being women¹⁸. Majority of the Editors in Environmental Science and Public Health journals are men (65.9%), with women and non-binary individuals being underrepresented. Most Editors (84%) are based at the high-income countries, with only 2.5% of journals having economic parity in their Editorial Boards. There is a significant lack of representation of women from low-income countries in leadership positions, such as

Editors-in-Chief¹⁹. The The journal of Clinical Therapeutics has successfully increased the representation of women on the Editorial Board to 50%, meeting its initial goal. The journal has introduced a pledge to improve racial and ethnic diversity on the editorial team, aiming to reflect the distribution seen amongst its readers and the general population. The journal has initiated an effort to highlight social influencers of health within its content²⁰. Some journals and To conduct this analysis, we downloaded the list of Indian journals in the field of Medical Sciences indexed in Science Citation Index-Expanded from Journal Citation Reports 2024. Journals were identified on the basis of research categories which include Anatomy & Morphology, Clinical Neurology, Dermatology, Endocrinology & Metabolism, Hematology, Immunology, Infectious Diseases, Medical Laboratory Technology, Medicine, General & Internal, Medicine Research & Experimental, Neurosciences, Oncology, Ophthalmology, Parasitology,

organizations are taking steps, e.g., The Lancet reported 50.6% women on Editorial Advisory Boards across 19 journals in 2020. Journals, like those of the Royal Society of Chemistry, have set targets (e.g., 36% women Editors and Reviewers), though quotas remain debated²¹. ([Percentage representation of women on Lancet journal International Advisory Boards](#) accessed on 10.06.2025)

Pathology, Paediatrics, Psychiatry, Public, Environmental & Occupational Health, Surgery and Tropical Medicine. There was total 26 journals retrieved which were manually scrutinized and Asian Pacific Journal of Tropical Medicine, Asian Pacific Journal of Tropical Biomedicine and Neurological Sciences and Neurophysiology were excluded as these journals are not published from India (Table 1).

Table 1: Female Representation in Indian Biomedical Journal

Journals	JIF (JCR 2024 release)	No of Editorial /Advisory Board Members	No of Female Members in Editorial Board	%age of Female Members	Gender of Chief Editor
Indian Journal of Pathology and Microbiology	0.8	68	30	44.12	Male
Indian Journal of Dermatology Venereology & Leprology	3.2	73	32	43.84	Female
Journal of Cytology	1.0	31	13	41.94	Male
Indian Journal of Ophthalmology	2.1	436	143	32.80	Female
Indian Paediatrics	1.7	49	16	32.65	Female
Journal Of Vector Borne Diseases	0.8	19	6	31.58	Male
Indian Journal of Public Health	0.9	30	9	30.00	Male
Neurology India	0.9	126	37	29.37	Male
Indian Journal of Medical Microbiology	1.4	55	16	29.09	Male
Journal of the Anatomical Society of India	0.2	35	10	28.57	Male
Indian Journal of Haematology and Blood Transfusion	0.7	71	20	28.17	Male
Annals of Indian Academy of Neurology	1.9	40	11	27.50	Male
Indian Journal of Cancer	0.9	50	13	26.00	Male
Journal of Postgraduate Medicine	1.0	36	9	25.00	Male
Indian Journal of Paediatrics	2.1	84	18	21.43	Male
Journal of Cancer Research and Therapeutics	1.4	19	4	21.05	Male
National Medical Journal of India	0.4	39	8	20.51	Male
Indian Journal of Dermatology	1.0	101	20	19.80	Male
Indian Journal of Psychiatry	1.7	147	21	14.29	Male
Indian Journal of Medical Research	2.7	51	6	11.76	Male
International Journal of Diabetes in Developing Countries	0.7	71	8	11.27	Male
Indian Journal of Surgery	0.4	48	4	8.33	Male
Journal of Minimal Access Surgery	1.0	34	1	2.94	Male

Website of all the journals were consulted and data of Editorial/Advisory Board members

were collected from the respective journal's site and gender of the name were retrieved through



google search and the affiliated organizations of the Editorial Board Members.

Majority of the Indian journals are published by Wolters Kluwer Medknow Publications; 15 of 23 biomedical journals are published by them; five by Springer India; two by Scientific Scholars LLC and one journal by Elsevier (Fig. 1).

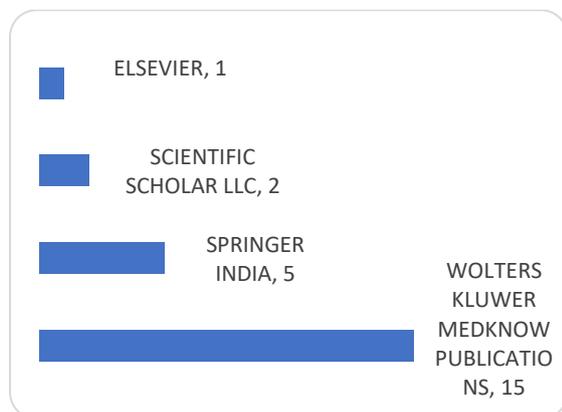


Fig 1: Publishers of Indian Medical Journals

These 23 journals represent 17 subdisciplines of biomedical sciences. There are two journals from Dermatology, Immunology, Paediatrics, Oncology, Surgery, and Medicine, General & Internal category and there are 11 journals representing Ophthalmology, Clinical Neurology, Psychiatry, Medical Laboratory Technology, Public, Environmental & Occupational Health, Neurosciences, Pathology, Infectious Diseases, Endocrinology & Metabolism, Haematology, and Anatomy & Morphology, one journal in each category. Most of the Indian biomedical journals are Quartile 4 journals (n=12), only 3 out of 23 Indian Biomedical journals only three have female Editor in Chief it includes Indian

Journal of Ophthalmology, Indian Paediatrics and Indian Journal of Dermatology, Venereology & Leprology. These 23 biomedical journals from India consist of 1733 number of Editorial and Advisory Board Members, out of which 455 (26.3%) members are female. There are four journals having more than 100 members in their editorial board. Indian Journal of Ophthalmology have the largest number of members (n= 436, nf=143, 32.8%) in the Editorial and advisory board followed by Indian Journal of Psychiatry (n=147, nf=21, 14.29%), Neurology India (n=126, nf=37, 29.37%) and Indian Journal of Dermatology (n=101, nf=20, 19.8%). Journal of Vector Borne Disease and Journal of Cancer Research and Therapeutics have the lowest number of members in the Editorial Board (n=19) Indian Journal of Pathology and Microbiology have highest percentage of female in Editorial Board Members (nf=30, 44.12%), it is followed by Indian Journal of Dermatology Venereology & Leprology (n=73, nf=32, 43.84%). Among the top five journals having highest number of females in the Editorial and Advisory Board three journals have female Editor in Chief. Journal of Minimal Access Surgery have the least number of female (n=34, nf=1, 2.94%) in the Editorial Board.

Conclusion

While female representation in the Editorial Boards has improved, it often lags behind the proportional strength of women's presence in the academia and authorship. Disparities vary by field, role, and region, with senior positions like Editor-in-Chief showing the least progress. Addressing this requires concerted efforts from journals, publishers, and academic institutions to foster inclusion and equity.

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