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Editorial: Women in Pediatric Dentistry Research: Are We There Yet?

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Editorial on the Research Topic

Women in Pediatric Dentistry Research: Are We There Yet?

Since Lucy Hobbs Taylor, the first woman to earn a degree in dentistry more than 150 years ago, the inclusion of women in dentistry has slowly progressed. Women make up only 30% to 40% of the dental workforce in Oceania, Europe, Africa and Asia (1). Besides the higher number of women in the profession, research shows that women earn less, even after adjusting for specialty and hours worked. Additionally, all else equal, dentists who are women are less likely to own a practice, more likely to be in dental service organizations and more likely to treat Medicaid patients (2).

In Academia, men still comprise the majority of faculty in the US – 61% vs. 37% (3) – and very few women are in academic leadership positions (3–5). The disparity between men and women in senior positions in academic dentistry is even larger around the World and women tend to be positioned in more supportive roles, such as program directors or associate directors at the department level, or assistant and associate deans in health science colleges (1–6). For example, only 16 out of 77 deans in Canadian and American dental schools are women (4–7). Moreover, salary inequity is also observed, where U.S. women earn about 82% of their male counterparts' salaries (8).

In relation to the Pediatric Dentistry as specialty, a recent publication from 2020 investigating the Pediatric Dentistry chairs in the United States and Canada revealed that, despite the similarity in age, women comprised 29.5% and men, 70.5% in the chair positions. Also, women had less leadership training than men, served less in the position and had lower ranking academic titles, spent more time in curriculum and teaching, than in biomedical research (9).

Although women scientists are leading ground-breaking research across the world, we still represent just 33.3% of the scientists (10). Gender gap in publications, grants awarded to women and the general perception in medicine that women are less interested in research have also been reported, in addition to a tendency of placing women in academia to fill administrative and teaching needs, leaving little time to write grants and conduct research (8). As a result, women receive fewer research funding dollars, and they are less likely to be journal editors, principal investigators or members of research boards (7).

In order to change this paradigm, there should be a collective effort worldwide, and gender equality must be promoted and stereotypes defeated. Therefore, we, the Editors,

together with *Frontiers in Dental Medicine*, are extremely proud to offer this Research Topic and promote the work of women researchers across all fields of Pediatric Dentistry. We highlight five publications that comprise this Topic, and expect that this represents a source of inspiration to women in pediatric dentistry research, stimulating bold leadership, research, and solutions that advance women in dental, oral and craniofacial research, and helping promote a systemic change in the near future.

Author contributions

Both authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

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