

P0679 Career breaks in medicine and early-career awards: missing the bus?

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Background: Though women make up the majority of medical school graduates, they are a distinct minority in academic medical settings. A major factor in this imbalance could be the career breaks that women disproportionately take to see to familial duties. These temporary absences often coincide with major career opportunities such as those provided by research grants and awards, many of which are limited to “young” researchers. Through an online questionnaire directed to medical societies, governmental and non-governmental funding societies, we set out to characterize the application restrictions that may be playing a role in the gender imbalance currently observed in accessing senior or leadership positions, and to determine whether any awarding institutions have already taken steps to provide protections for such career breaks.

Materials/methods: The internet-based, 23-question survey was sent to all medical societies and medical funding bodies officially affiliated with ESCMID and offering grants and/or awards; societies or organizations unrelated to medicine or not offering grants or awards were excluded.

Results: Of the 50 organizations contacted, 15 (30%) responded at least partially and 10 (20%) fully. Three of these 10 organizations (30%) have a formal parity commission and 2/10 (20%) have introduced measures to improve gender balance. There is a fixed age limit (40 years) for applicants of research prizes or grants in 2/10 (20%) organizations, while 5 (50%) organizations require applicants to have recently completed a fellowship. Only one organization (10%) has taken measures to account for career breaks; this society allows an extension of the eligibility window to up to one year for sick leave, and 18 months for parental leave.

Conclusions: Currently there are too few measures in place to address the problem of temporary absences coinciding with major opportunities during key periods in professional development. Consensus recommendations are needed to decrease the gender imbalance in academic/leadership positions related to limited access to early grants and awards in case of career breaks.

