

Characteristics and Academic Accomplishments of Leaders in National Orthopaedic Surgery Organizations

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INTRODUCTION:

Qualifications needed to achieve national leadership positions in academic orthopaedic surgery are poorly defined. This study analyzes the academic accomplishments of elected Presidents of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS), American Orthopaedic Association (AOA), and American Board of Orthopaedic Surgeons (ABOS).

METHODS:

The AAOS, AOA, and ABOS provided names of elected Presidents. Curriculum vitae were reviewed to collect demographics, training characteristics, bibliometrics, and National Institutes of Health (NIH) research funding of contemporary Presidents (1990-2020).

RESULTS:

Eighty Presidents were included. Most Presidents were male (98%) and Caucasian (95%). Only 5% were under-represented racial minorities (3% African American, 1% Asian, and 1% Hispanic). Few had an additional graduate degree (13% MS, 1% PhD). The top ten residency programs trained 47% of all Presidents. Most had fellowship training (59%) and the top three sub-specialties were Hand Surgery (11%), Pediatric Orthopaedics (11%), and Adult Reconstruction (10%). Twenty-nine Presidents participated in a travel fellowship (36%). The average age at appointment was 58 ± 5 years old implying an average of 27 years since completion of orthopaedic surgery residency. Most Presidents served as department chair (70%) at time of appointment. The average h-index was 36 ± 23 resulting from 150 ± 126 manuscripts. Nineteen Presidents had NIH funding (24%). There were no significant differences in the distribution of H index values between Presidents of the three organizations (p=0.080). There were more Presidents with NIH funding in the AOA (39%) and AAOS (25%) than the ABOS (0%) (p=0.007).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

Presidents of national organizations in orthopaedic surgery possess high levels of scholarly output as measured by the H index. Women and racial minorities remain under-represented at the highest levels of leadership. This study creates a benchmark to advance diversity and inclusion efforts and make future appointments in an equitable manner.

