

Introduction

The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others have led many to confront the issue of systemic racism. One of the most powerful signals we can send as professionals is a willingness to look into the history of our institution, take stock of its past or present failings and document them publicly as a reference point for tracking the progress still needed in this country.

The authors here present results of their review of the governance for the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB). The research question posed is a simple one: "How well has FSMB achieved diversity in its board of directors?"

Methods

The authors assembled a list of all members of the FSMB board of directors from 1980 to 2020. The authors assigned each board member into gender and race/ethnicity categories determined through the use of board rosters, individual and group photographs and the authors' personal familiarity with the individuals. The authors limited their data set to exclude board members prior to 1980 as prior research had already revealed that no women or persons of color serving on this governing board until the mid-1980s.

Conclusions

After a total absence of gender and racial/ethnic diversity during the first 70 years of the organization's existence, the FSMB board of directors has seen significant change in the nature of its composition, especially over the past twenty years. Women comprised 31% of governance from 2000-2020; white, non-Hispanic members constituted 17% of governance. Despite factors outside its control, (e.g., an elective process for selecting governance; candidate pool limited to members on a state medical boards), FSMB has achieved significant progress toward a more diverse, representative governing body.

Diversity in FSMB Governance

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FSMB Board of Directors, 1960



FSMB Board of Directors, 2022

FSMB has achieved significant improvement toward diverse representation on its Board of Directors since the 1980s.

Time Period	Gender			Race/Ethnicity		
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
1980-1999	Male	50	89%	White, non-Hispanic	51	90%
	Female	6	11%	All Others	5	10%
2000-2020	Male	58	69%	White, non-Hispanic	70	83%
	Female	26	31%	All Others	14	17%

Study Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, this review was conducted outside the auspices of an IRB. Second, diversity has been narrowly defined as gender and race/ethnicity and does not include other relevant variables, e.g., religion. Third, both gender and race/ethnicity were treated as binary categories. Categorization is not nuanced and ultimately relied to an extent on subjective decisions by the researchers. Finally, information for this categorization was not taken directly from the individual board members. Instead, it was determined by photographs, Google search and the personal knowledge of the authors who, while having met the majority of the 140 individuals, were not personally acquainted with many individuals particularly from the 1980s and early 1990s.

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JOURNAL of MEDICAL
REGULATION

