

History of Women in the CUA

Contribution by: Karen Psooy

Although there is no longer a significant gender imbalance in medical school enrolment, an imbalance remains with the specialty of urology. However, the admittance of women into the specialty has resulted in their inclusion into positions of CUA leadership. The first female member of the CUA board was Jocelyn Tessier (deceased), serving as a Member-at-Large (MAL) from 1999-2001, followed by Denise Arsenault (deceased) (MAL 2001-02), Karen Psooy (MAL 2004-07), and Marie-Paule Jammal (MAL 2007-10). For as long as I have been attending CUA annual meetings, there have been efforts to have the female urologists get together, initially informally as a sponsored "Women in Urology" breakfast. This group has recently formalized into the Society of Canadian Women in Urology, becoming a CUA affiliate in 2022, and providing representation on the CUA EDIA advisory committee. However, when I attended my first CUA AGM, in 2005, I distinctly remember being the only female urologist in the room. "Where were the women I saw at the breakfast?" I wondered. My impression was that the female CUA members did not see a need to engage in the governance of the CUA. For the next few years, I actively guilted my female colleagues into attending and taking a "seat at the table;" initially the group was small, and all were seated at my table. However, this has changed significantly over the years such that at the 2023 AGM there were twenty-one women in attendance, representing 23% of AGM attendees, and none at my prompting or seated at my table.

Since 2004, the CUA board has had at least one female member, if not as a voting member, then in an officer-elect position. The first female to hold executive office was Anne-Marie Houle (Treasurer 2011-15), followed by Karen Psooy (Secretary 2012-16), and currently Ashley Cox (VP communications 2021-'25) and Marie-Paule Jammal (Secretary 2021-25). Bridging the gap years, Dianne Heritz served as a MAL from 2016-19. Currently, of the fourteen voting board members, four are women, including Jill Hudson (MAL 2021-24) and Geneviève Nadeau (MAL 2022-25).

The first woman to chair a CUA standing committee was Dianne Heritz, appointed to co-chair the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) for the 2013 meeting, followed by Ashley Cox co-chairing the Scientific Program (Sci Pro) Committee (2018), Linda Lee (LOC co-chair 2020), Stephanie Tatzel (LOC chair 2021), Lysanne Campeau (Sci Pro co-chair 2023) and Andrea Lantz Powers (Sci Pro co-chair 2024), all by appointment. Ashley Cox was appointed to chair the CUA EDIA Advisory Committee (2019-). The recently formed CUA Resident and Fellows Committee, has been chaired by two female Candidate Members, Anjali Lobo (2019-21) and Heather Morris (2021-22); this committee is unique in that it determines its own chair.

Overall, I am pleased with the progress that has been made within the CUA to engage their female members and provide them with positions of leadership. Currently women represent 14% of the Active and working Senior membership. If the goal is reflective representation, rather than equal representation, then currently women are well represented at the AGM and board meetings. Notably, a female has yet to hold office as CUA President, although, I believe the membership has been ready for this for some time, and it is imminent. However, as I write this, I note that there has yet to be a female elected by the membership to chair a CUA standing committee. Therefore, when the Nomination Committee sends out their annual call for nominations in the Fall CUA NEWSLETTER, I ask that you take this into consideration.