

**Society of Biological Psychiatry  
Women's Leadership Group Update  
May, 2016**

Dear Fellow Member,

Psychiatry is one of the most popular career choices for women. In many countries, women outnumber men in training and academic positions. Despite this, women fare worse than similarly qualified men in multiple metrics, including salary levels, grant funding, academic publications and promotions, leading to under representation of women in leadership positions within clinical and academic departments and professional organizations. For example, according to the 2014 report of the Association of American Medical Colleges, 55% of psychiatry residents are women but only 13% were department chairs.

The context and the dynamics leading to the phenomenon of the "leaky pipeline" to female leadership in psychiatry, and indeed in academia in general, are complex. Much is already known about key factors associated with attrition rates amongst women. What is clear is the need to provide a platform for change that recognizes the problems faced by women, raises awareness of implicit gender biases, and offers women opportunities and tools for advancement and leadership. The Society of Biological Psychiatry (SOBP) has a long and established tradition in promoting excellence in scientific research and education within psychiatry. This tradition can only be enriched and enhanced by the equal participation of women at all levels of the society.

To this effect, we formed the SOBP Women's Leadership Group (WLG). The committee, chaired by Dr Mary Phillips, was initiated at the 70<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Society, with the participation of the majority of senior (i.e., full professor) female members of SOBP. This initial focus of the WLG on senior female members of SOBP was driven by the need not only for a peer group for senior females in biological psychiatry, but also by the realization that many senior females in our field lack leadership skills training, and that this may be one of the barriers to taking on leadership roles that women in our field experience. By providing such training and peer group support to senior women in our field, the WLG could subsequently support and nurture junior female colleagues. The mission of the WLG was thus developed to reflect this focus: "To meet the identified needs of senior and mid-career female scientists who are members of the Society, to enable them to be even more effective leaders and role models in the field of biological psychiatry."

During the first 12 months of the WLG, members of the WLG have had bi-monthly conference calls, during which the following were identified as key first steps toward the goal of our mission statement. These were confirmed at the second annual meeting of the WLG at the annual meeting of SOBP in Atlanta in 2016.

1. Survey. We developed and sent out a survey to all female attendees (members and non-members of the Society) to identify the needs of women in science, and possible facilities that could be provided by the Society to meet these needs. 418 women across the range of faculty levels responded to the survey. Key themes that were evident in the responses were: the need for training on collaborative skills, leadership style, and mentorship; strategies to cope with gender bias; and requests for expansion of activities at the annual meeting for women in biological psychiatry at all faculty levels.
2. Review of the collated statistics on female roles as journal editorial board members, committee members, and plenary and symposium speakers at the SOBP annual meeting. While SOBP has made impressive progress in increasing the representation of women at all levels of the society, there remains a disparity, with more male than female representation generally across the board. Thus, the WLG is making recommendations to SOBP Council to work with committees and the journal editorial boards to increase female representation at all of the above levels of the Society.
3. Development of a senior female scientist leadership skills training forum. As a group, we concluded that a priority of the WLG was to provide a forum to provide leadership training skills to senior women in our field. It was agreed that the forum would take the form of an evening workshop at the annual SOBP meeting, and invitees would be the members of the WLG in the first instance. The plan will be to quickly expand this to include other senior female members of the Society.
4. Expansion of WLG activities. At the second annual meeting of the WLG at the SOBP annual meeting in Atlanta, it was decided that expansion of WLG activities will be necessary to meet the goal of our mission statement. Thus, moving forward, the WLG will work on recommendations to expand the WLG program at the annual SOBP meeting to include activities that will be open to all female annual SOBP meeting attendees (junior and senior, members and non-members).
5. Next steps. We would like to hear from all female SOBP members, and have your most up to date contact information and details of faculty appointment level for our database. This will help us reach out and include others in the above activities.

**Action Item:** The Society will be sending an email later this month asking all members to update their member record with their complete contact/demographic information. In the meantime, we would like all female SOBP members to **email your faculty appointment level** to Maggie Peterson at [sobp@sobp.org](mailto:sobp@sobp.org) so we can populate your record now with this one piece of information.

Thank you!  
Mary L. Phillips and Sophia Frangou

*Present WLG Steering Committee:*

Katherine Aitchison, Huda Akil, Victoria Arango, Carrie Bearden, Karen Berman, Hilary Blumberg, Linda Carpenter, Barbara Cornblatt, Melissa DelBello, Naomi Feinberg, Judy Ford, Sophia Frangou, Ellen Frank, Raquel Gur, Amanda Law, Ellen Leibenluft, Helen S Mayberg, Maria Oquendo, Mary L. Phillips (Chair), Uma Rao, Yvette Sheline, Helen B. Simpson, Trisha Suppes, Sophia Vinogradov, Myrna Weissman, Leanne Williams, Kristina Deligiannidis (ex officio, Education Committee Chair), Carolyn Drazinic (ex officio, Mentorship Committee Chair)