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Sex-Based Reporting of Common Musculoskeletal Conditions

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Introduction: Sex- and gender-based differences affect all aspects of health and disease, including musculoskeletal conditions. However, it is unknown how often authors publish outcomes of common conditions based on sex. We reviewed the frequency with which articles in orthopedic journals published sex-specific outcomes with regard to a condition with known sex-based differences and one in which differences are less known.

Materials and Methods: Articles that reported original clinical studies from four high-impact orthopedic journals were reviewed: *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery (JBJS)*, *Clinical Orthopedics and Related Research (CORR)*, *American Journal of Sports Medicine (AJSM)*, and *Journal of Arthroplasty (JOA)*. *JBJS* and *CORR* were reviewed as journals intended for a general audience, while *AJSM* and *JOA* were included as subspecialty journals. Analysis of data based on sex beyond the statement of how many men and women were included was designated as successfully reporting sex-specific outcomes. The gender of authors was assessed for impact on reporting.

Results: Sex-specific outcomes were reported in 24%–29% of articles regarding rotator cuff pathology and in 32%–40% of publications concerning knee osteoarthritis. There was a trend toward more publications with sex-specific outcomes in knee osteoarthritis ($p = 0.0562$). No significant changes in rates of reporting were noted over time. Articles listing a woman as the first or last author were significantly more likely to report results based on sex.

Conclusions: While there was a trend for sex-specific outcomes to be reported more often in knee osteoarthritis, the level of reporting was still low. Reporting based on sex was higher if a woman was the first or last author. To improve care for all patients, sex-specific outcomes should be reported across all orthopedic conditions by all researchers.