



Policy Brief 5

Gender Imbalances in Health Research

October 18, 2011

Carina A. Furnée, PhD
Maastricht University, Netherlands

Gender Imbalances in the **Content** of Health Research

These refer to disparities in *what* is studied:

- Slow recognition of health problems that affect women and men differently
- Misdirected and incomplete approaches to women's and men's health (care) needs
- Lack of recognition of the interaction between gender and other social factors
(education, income, employment, housing)

Gender Imbalances in the **Process** of Health Research

These refer to *how* topics are studied

- Lack of data disaggregation in projects
- Lack of researcher sensitivity to the varied dimensions of disparity
- Lack of a gender perspective and/or exclusion of female subjects from medical research and clinical trials

Steps for Policy Action (1)

Continue and increase of financial support for research that challenges both the content and the process of existing health research

- Stimulate cooperative exchange among national grant councils, affiliates, research institutions and individual researchers concerning criteria for funding
- Expand national and international networks of organisations and individuals in health research
- Disseminate insights in engendering health research, policy and action initiatives, funding opportunities, and other resources

Steps for Policy Action (2)

Continue and increase the encouragement of research that focuses on the development of methods of sex and gender analysis in health research

- Support health researchers to further develop theoretical frameworks and practical applications for integrating sex and gender analysis in research, clinical and public health practices
- Incorporate sex and gender analyses as further controls to provide critical rigor to research, policy, and practice

Steps for Policy Action (3)

Encourage the development of research methods to study health from an intersectional perspective

- Support for research from an intersectional perspective
- Encourage new ways to theorise and empirically research the factors and processes that determine people's health
- Collaborate with other disciplines such as social psychology, sociology, anthropology and history
- Support for networks of organisations and individuals from the different disciplines that actively disseminate research findings

Steps for Policy Action (4)

Prioritise major public health problems with relations to other domains, such as violence against women, occupational health issues, (mental) health needs and care options

- Encourage research capacity-building action to help forge multidisciplinary teams
- Encourage researchers from relevant disciplines including those who have not been primarily or previously involved in health research to become involved in health research
- Focus on gender relations—how men and women's health relate to each other
- Encourage research that will help to understand how daily interactions—embedded in larger gendered structures—between and among a diversity of men and women structurally contribute to differences health and illness



This work was made possible through funding provided by the European Commission, Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (EAHC) and undertaken as work for European network on policies and interventions to tackle gender based inequities in health.

