Gender and Science: Shifting the Paradigm of HIV Research

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CIHR’s Structure

13 Virtual Research Institutes

Population and Public Health
Aboriginal Peoples’ Health
Health Services and Policy Research
Gender and Health
Genetics
Infection and Immunity
Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes
Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction
Cancer Research
Aging
Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis
Circulatory and Respiratory Health
Human Development, Child and Youth Health

CIHR’s Structure
A Practical Guide to Study Design with Sex and Gender in Mind
Tip #1

- Always collect data on sex/gender and compare “men/boys” and “women/girls” for differential outcomes
Tip #2

• Define your terms – conceptually and operationally
Are you?

- Male?
- Female?
- Other?
Tip #3

- Consider how you capture sex/gender
- We often don’t know how researchers have determined who was male and who was female and whether they mean sex or gender
  - Self-report?
  - Observation?
  - Guessing?
• Theorise about the mechanisms by which sex/gender effect particular health outcomes.
  – E.g., Biological susceptibility to HIV in women – prolonged exposure to fluids, tissue injury during intercourse, surface of the cervix particularly vulnerable, bacterial vaginosis etc.
  – E.g., Social susceptibility to HIV in women – lack of power, lack of skill in asking partners to use condoms.
Tip #5

• Explore heterogeneity (across and within sex and gender)
• Distinguish the effects of gender from “gendered effects.”
Tip #7

• Explore gender bias in your scales and measures

AIDS

Diagnostic Criteria

→

Depression

Scale
Tip #8

• Question taken for granted knowledge
Tip #9

In pre-clinical work use models that help you capture sex-based effects.
Tip #10

Act Now for Better Science!

• Revisit an earlier study
• Augment an existing research plan with a sex and gender-based analysis
• Incorporate sex and gender considerations from the outset
Engendering change….

Are *sex* (biological) considerations taken into account in this study?*  
Are *gender* (socio-cultural) considerations taken into account in this study?* 
If YES please describe how sex and/or gender considerations will be considered in your research design. * 
If NO please explain why sex and/or gender are not applicable in your research design.*

(2000 character limit)
Why Gender and Sex Matter in All Health Research

• Sex and gender are everybody’s business.

• Without considering gender and sex, we risk not only misapplying findings, but missing opportunities to improve health.
Contact IGH

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Thank you!