

Improving Collective Health and Social Care through a Better Consideration of Sex and Gender: Analytical Report by the French National Authority for Health

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Abstract : Background: The role of biological sex and gender identity -whether assigned or chosen- as health determinants are far from a recent discovery: several reports have stressed out how being a woman or a man could affect health on various scales. However, taking it into consideration beyond stereotypes and rigid binary assumptions still seems to be a work in progress. Method: The report is a synthesis on a variety of specific topics, each of which was studied by a specialist from the French National Authority for Health (HAS), through an analysis of existing literature on both healthcare policy construction process and instruments (norms, data analysis, clinical trials, guidelines, and professional practices). This work also implied a policy analysis of French recent public health laws and a retrospective study of guidelines with a gender mainstreaming approach. Results: The analysis showed that though sex and gender were well-known determinants of health, their consideration by both public policy and health operators was often incomplete, as it does not incorporate how sex and gender interact, as well as how they interact with other factors. As a result, the health and social care systems and their professionals tend to reproduce some stereotypical and inadequate habits. Though the data available often allows to take sex and gender into consideration, such data is often underused in practice guidelines and policy formulation. Another consequence is a lack of inclusiveness towards transgender or intersex persons. Conclusions: This report first urges for raising awareness of all the actors of health, in its broadest definition, that sex and gender matter beyond first-look conclusions. It makes a series of recommendations in order to reshape policy construction in the health sector on the one hand and to design public health instruments to make them more inclusive regarding sex and gender on the other hand. The HAS finally committed to integrate sex and gender preoccupations in its workings methods, to be a driving force in the spread of these concerns.

Keywords : biological sex, determinants of health, gender, healthcare policy instruments, social accompaniment

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