

Gender Competence in Health Policy

Annual Education Program in
Reproductive Biology Lecture

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- Monash graduate, Physiology and Pharmacology & Masters in Reproductive Sciences
- medical research background
- further studies in sociological research methodology particularly gender studies
- fieldwork for PhD in Public Health on AIDS in Uganda with UK MRC
- Employed by School of Rural Health to report on Gender Issues in Rural Medical Practice Project
- As Project Officer for Gender Working Party have mainstreamed a gender perspective into entire curriculum

Outline

1. Define the concepts
2. What I do to clarify concepts in action
3. What you need to be able to identify
4. Tool for doing it

Definitions

What is the difference between sex and gender?

- Sex = male and female
- Gender = masculine and feminine

SEX

- refers to biological differences; chromosomes, hormonal profiles, internal and external sex organs.

GENDER

- describes the qualities that a society or culture delineates as masculine or feminine.

Gender is Culturally Defined...

'man' = male + masculine social role

a real 'man', 'masculine' or 'manly'

'woman' = female + feminine social role

a real 'woman', 'feminine' or 'womanly'

Sex or Gender difference

100% biological = *Sex Difference*

**Everything else must be considered a
*Gender Difference***

(...because you can't separate people
from their environment, so gender is
blanket term)

What I do....

UN WHO and 'Mainstreaming'

- 'Mainstreaming' simply means that a concept (or process) be fully integrated into all institutional processes and policies so that it becomes a 'mainstream', common or everyday concept.

Gender Competence

- Gender competence reflects the capacity to identify where difference on the basis of sex or gender is significant, and act in ways that produce more equitable outcomes for men and women.

Where Gender Competence is important

- Medical evidence
- Medical education
- Clinical practice (IVF)
- Policy regarding services and practice

Mainstreaming a Gender Competence

- Making gender concepts more 'mainstream', common or everyday within medical education and practice and policy
- Practically it means acknowledging where difference is important throughout the entire curriculum and teaching process, in clinical practice and in policy development, and providing balance where needed.

Gender Competent Policy

...promotes balance in outcomes
for men and women.

What you need to be able to
identify and analyse...

Gender-blindness

- failure to identify difference on the basis of gender
- occurs at all levels of medical practice and policy
- often perpetuated by usage of gender neutral language (patient or doctor)
- neutral language obscures the importance of sex or gender

Gender-blindness

- impedes the achievement of balance and equity
- pervasiveness is such that researchers, educators, practitioners and policy makers are not aware of it
- much the same as systematic or institutionalised racism; you don't notice it unless it affects you
- systemic pervasiveness of gender-blindness allows it to be perpetuated

Examples of Gender-blindness in medical research

- 2/3 of all pharmaceuticals used to treat both men and women and 2/3 of all diseases that affect men and women have only been researched in men
- 50% of Couples infertility is male factor and yet most IVF programmes are run out of O & G and most research money is spent on female procedures

Gender Competent Policy Response

- US National Institutes of Health fund only research that includes female study participants where the condition under investigation affects both men and women
- resulted in the publication of sex disaggregated data and therefore evidence of difference where it is significant
- This gender competent policy has resulted in gender competent medical evidence

How you can analyze this yourself..

Gender Analysis using the Social Analysis Framework

Purpose:

- To deconstruct issues in a way that suggests multilevel strategies for dealing with them

Process:

- Identify barriers and enablers at all levels
- Suggest ways of dealing with barriers and promoting enablers

Social Analysis Framework

1. Individual

2. Environmental

- cultural
- communities
- economics

3. Structural

- institutional
- Legislative
- international laws, policy and institutions eg UN/WHO

Exam Questions

- Short answer : Explain the definition and consequences of one of the concepts mentioned today
- Long answer: Perform a Gender Analysis of one of the following issues using a social analysis framework and discuss the implications for policy

Where to find me...

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