



Making visible the invisible:
Development of the guidelines on
Sex and Gender Equity in Research (SAGER)

by the EASE Gender Policy Committee

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On behalf of Shirin Heidari & Tom Babor
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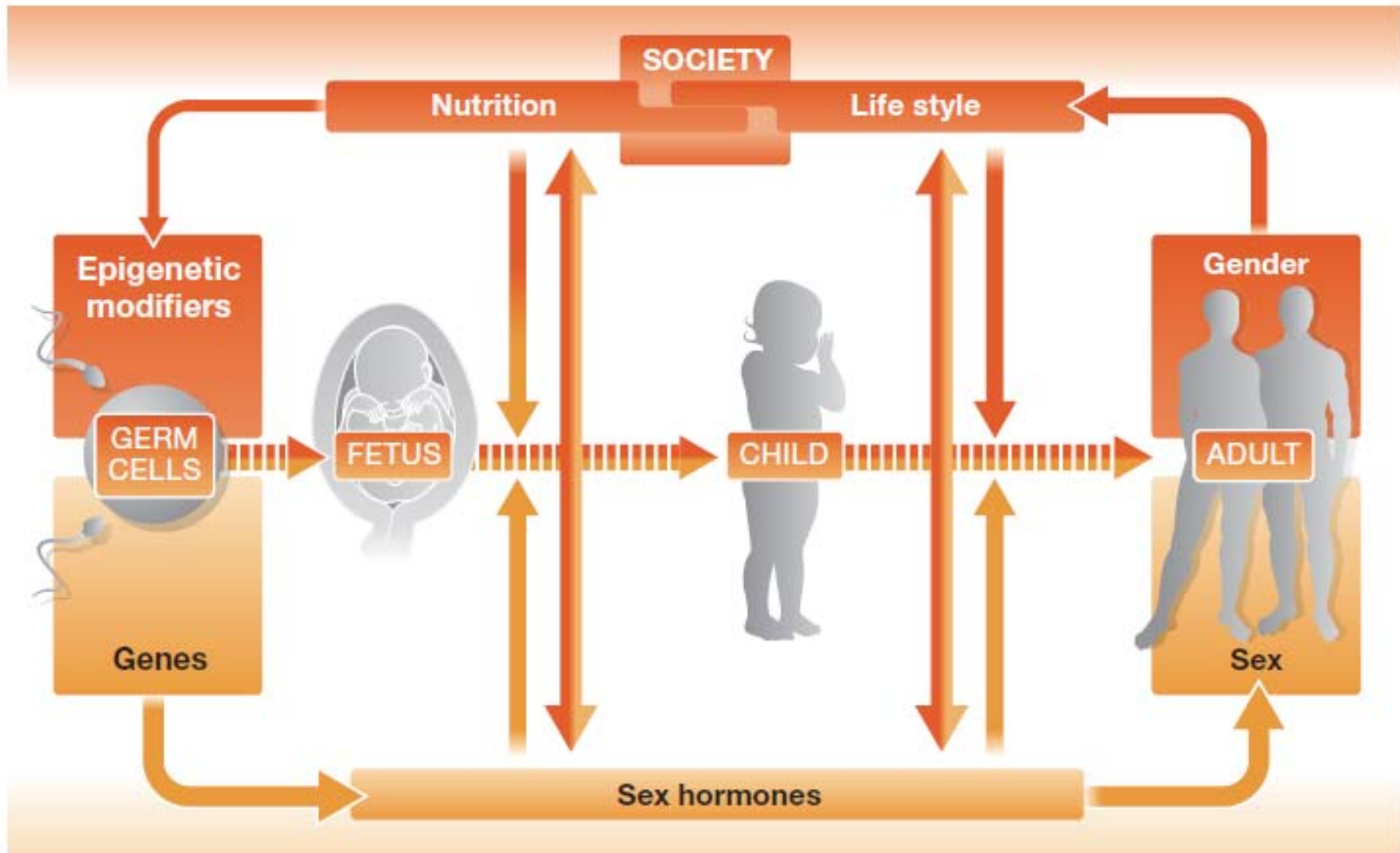


Fig 1 | Complex interdependency of sex and gender in the human.

Source: Vera Regitz-Zagrosek; Sex and gender differences in health EMBO reports 2012

Male Scent May Compromise Biomedical Studies

or a female experimenter was present. “We were stunned by the results,” he says. The rodents showed significantly fewer signs of pain (an average of a 36% lower score on the grimace scale) when a male researcher was in the room than when a female researcher—or no researcher at all—was there.



What's that smell? The presence of a male scientist can influence research results.



Reasons for concern

- Both sex and gender are important determinants of health and disease, which are often ignored in scientific research.
- There are significant gaps in knowledge in part because of a general orientation of scientific attention to the male side of the sex/gender equation.



Are we turning a blind eye to Gender Blind Reporting?

Gender blind reporting is common:

- Sex of subjects are not reported
- Sex of subjects are reported but data are not presented dissaggregated by sex
- Analysis ignores any potential sex/gender differences and data are presented as if data are of general applicabilty: *Overgeneralization**

* Nieuwenhoven and Klinge, AbstractScientific Excellence in Applying Sex- and Gender-Sensitive Methods in Biomedical and Health Research Journal of Women's Health 2010



EASE Gender Policy Committee

Vision

Greater gender balance in science and publishing practices for enhanced quality, diversity and transparency, for science to remain at the forefront of innovation.

Mission:

To advance sex/gender reporting and gender balance in editorial management on a global level, and across disciplines.



Evaluate gender equality in journals

The European Association of Science Editors established a gender policy committee last year to develop a set of standards for adoption by scientific journals. As co-chairs of the committee, our first step is to invite science editors to contribute to a survey of gender-equality policies in their journals (see go.nature.com/wor7ks; survey closes on 10 April).

In this survey, we ask editors for their views on considering sex and gender in experimental design and data analysis, and on presenting data that are broken down by sex. Information is also requested on gender balance and its promotion among editorial staff, editorial boards and peer reviewers.

Our hope is that all journals will eventually follow *Nature's* example in promoting gender equality in science (see www.nature.com/women).

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Development of the guidelines on Sex and Gender Equity in Research (SAGER)

Modus operandi

- Keyword searches to identify journals that had specific policies on sex and gender.
- Scanned websites of journals that have an explicit sex/gender focus
- Consulted journal articles and expert committee reports
- Reviewed policies of peer-reviewed journals already known to the Gender Policy Committee
- Inquired into other types of policies and guidelines as part of the EASE survey
- Synthesized current policies and recommendations into reporting guidelines



Recommendation # 1

Terminology

- Exercise care in the terminology used to describe research methods and explain results in order to avoid confusing sex with gender

Recommendation # 2

Title and Abstract

- If only one sex is included in the study, the title as well as the abstract should specify the sex of animals or any cells, tissues, and other material derived from these, and the sex/gender of human participants



Recommendation # 3

Introduction

- Where appropriate, it should be reported if sex and/or gender differences are expected

Recommendation # 4

Methods

- How sex and gender were taken into account in the design of the study should be clearly stated, including reporting of representation of males and females.
- The reasons for the exclusion of males or females should be justified.



Recommendation # 5

Results

- Data should be routinely presented disaggregated by sex.
- Where appropriate, meaningful sex/gender based analyses should be reported regardless of positive or negative outcome.
- The reasons for lack of any gender analysis should be justified.



Recommendation # 6

Discussion

- The implications of sex/gender analyses should be discussed.
- And it should be indicated whether lack of such analyses could have affected the results.



Recommended Actions for Editors to Implement Reporting Policies

1. Adopt the guidelines as a formal policy in Instructions to Authors.
2. Screen initial submissions to determine whether sex/gender is relevant to the topic of the study; if so, determine whether the issue has been addressed adequately enough to proceed with peer-review
3. Encourage peer reviewers to consider journal's sex/gender policy in the evaluation of manuscripts.
4. Train editorial staff on the importance of sex/gender sensitive reporting

Thank you

Vive la Différence



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