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

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

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.
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 applicability: *Overgeneralization*

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

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