

SUMMARY OF THE NOVA SCOTIA HEALTH RESEARCH FOUNDATION WORKSHOP

“‘What’s Gender/Sex Got To Do With It?’: Health Research, Policy and Practice in Nova Scotia”

On November 19-20, 2007, over 60 researchers, academics, representatives from community organizations, and policymakers gathered at Pier 21 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to attend the “‘What’s Gender/Sex Got To Do With It?’: Health Research, Policy and Practice in Nova Scotia” workshop. The workshop was funded/organized by the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation, and facilitated by staff of the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health. The purpose of the workshop was to encourage the use of gender-based analysis in health research, and also to familiarize participants with the skills involved in conducting a gender-based analysis on qualitative and quantitative data.

This workshop is designed to provide health researchers, policy analysts, planners, and clinicians the skills to understand when and how gender, sex and other social determinants of health influence their work; for instance, the validity of researchers’ work is affected by gender, the effectiveness of programming for policy analysts and planners is contingent on gender, and the implications of treatment options and outcomes employed by clinicians vary according to gender. The four objectives of the “‘What’s Gender/Sex Got To Do With It?’: Health Research, Policy and Practice in Nova Scotia” workshop were: to increase awareness of gender-based analysis (GBA) as an essential tool for research, policies and programs; to understand the differences between gender and sex as determinants of health; to build participants’ capacity to undertake GBA; and to demonstrate how GBA can strengthen policies, programs and research.

Dr. Barbara Clow, of the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health, brought greetings to the session, and emphasized the importance of gender in creating more effective health services and policy for women and men. Erika Burger and Claire Walsh, also of the Atlantic Centre of Excellence, presented material on the history and goals of gender-based analysis, followed by Claire Walsh’s discussion of the difference between gender and sex. Sandra McFadyen of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women and Larry Baxter of the Nova Scotia Advisory Commission on AIDS presented “Gender Roles 101: An Interactive Introduction to Power and Gender Roles”, and Dr. Clow concluded the afternoon with a case study in gender and health planning. Margaret Haworth-Brockman of the Prairie Women’s Health Centre of Excellence was the keynote speaker for the evening’s public event; she delivered a presentation entitled “Considering Women’s Health: Indicators, Gender-Based Analysis and Evidence” moderated by Dr. Clow.

The following morning’s session saw Dr. Clow introduce the case study exercises in gender-based analysis and group facilitators who guided participants through the examination of gender in non-disaggregated data, disaggregated data and resultant implications. Gender-based analysis was proven to be a lens through which services and policy devoted to improving the health and well-being of various populations could be formulated or improved. Each group provided feedback through their facilitators as to the considerations involved in conducting gender-based analysis, and the opportunity to pose questions to the larger group was utilized by many.

The afternoon's speaker, Dr. Cyndi Brannen of the Centre for Research in Family Health, presented her work in the area of unpaid caregiving, and Claire Walsh spoke to the list of gender-based analysis resources that was included in participants' information packages. Overall, both the presentations and exercises were well received, with the only suggestion for future workshops being that those with some prior experience of gender-based analysis could be provided with more challenging scenarios that demanded a high level of expertise with gender and other health determinants.

The workshop concluded with heartfelt thanks extended to the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation for another successful workshop, and the staff of the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health and Pier 21 for their facilitation and careful organization.

Submitted by

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