

# **Gender and Mental Health - A Lifecourse Approach**

**The European Institute of Women's Health**



***[www.eurohealth.ie](http://www.eurohealth.ie)***



# Charitable Objectives



- The European Institute of Women's Health is a health NGO launched in 1996.
- The EIWH advocates for a gender-sensitive approach to health, research and policy in order to reduce health inequalities and improve quality of life.

# Advisory Roles



- European Medicines Agency (EMA)
  - Member of Patient and Consumer Working party – Patient representative
  - Member of EMA Geriatric Expert Group
  - Member of EMA WG of Clinical Trials Results for Laypersons
- European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC)
  - Member of Technical Advisory Group on Vaccination
  - Member of ECDC Advisory Forum Representing patients
- European Commission DG SANTE:
  - Health Technology Assessment Stakeholder Network 2023
  - Joint Action on Vaccination, Stakeholder Network
- DG Research Horizon 2020: Previous member of Expert Advisory Groups
  - Demographic Change Health and Wellbeing
  - Gender Advisory Group

# Advisory Roles



- European Patients Forum (EPF)
  - Digital Health Working Group
  - Universal Access to Healthcare Working Group
  - Label to Enable Advisory Board
  - COMPAR-EU
- European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) Board Member and former Presidency
- WHO external expert on gender mainstreaming
- WHO Academy Quality Committee Board – Lead Patients and Community of Interest Group
- WHO European Strategy for Women's Health
- WHO EMRO Region: Report on Gender and Health
- Women's Health Task Force – Department of Health Ireland: Co-chair
- Women in Global Health: Advisory Board
- BRMMI-ERIC
- ECH Alliance



# Impact of Sex and Gender

- Biological factors influence women's mental health.
- Women are a diverse group and we must examine women's mental health through different intersections of age, education, ethnicity, social positions, and social structures.

# Facts and Figures



## PREVALENCE

- Women have higher rates of internalising disorders such as **depression** and **anxiety** compared to men.
- The depression gap widens with increasing age. Among those aged 50 to 64 years, twice as many women report chronic depression compared to men.
- Women are 2 - 3 more times likely to suffer from an **eating disorder** compared to men.
- **Perinatal depression** affects as many as 1 in 5 pregnant women. **Postnatal depression** affects 1 in 10 women.
- **1 in 3 women** in Europe have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.
- Women's caring responsibilities can impact the time they have for their own mental health and to seek support. 80% of care is provided informally (unpaid) and **75% of informal carers** are women.
- Women's well-being was more adversely affected by the COVID-19 crisis.
- Vulnerable population groups, people living with disabilities, young people and adolescents, migrant populations, as well as LGBTQI+ communities are more at risk of mental health issues.



# ACCESS TO TREATMENT

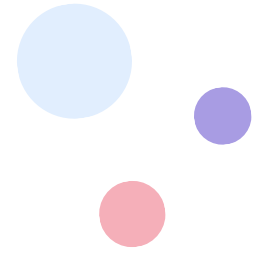
- Women can experience barriers in seeking help from professional mental health services.
- Stigma is still a huge barrier to accessing treatment.
- “Gender stereotypes have consequences for women’s health in terms of self-confidence and well-being” (WHO, 2016) and access to treatment and care.



# What do women need?

*A gender-sensitive life-course approach to mental health.*





# We need

**Step 1**

**Research**

**Step 2**

**Policy**

**Step 3**

**Education and Awareness**

# Research



- Women are under-represented in medical research. Women have more than a 50% greater risk of developing adverse drug reactions compared to men.

## **We need:**

- Investment in gender-specific research funding streams at EU and national Level.
- Support cross-national data and research, which is sex, gender and age disaggregated.
- Support knowledge and best practice sharing between Member States.
- Support involvement of women and their families.
- EIWH Reports address mental health:
  - Maternal Health in the EU.
  - Midlife and Older Women's Health.
  - A Lifetime of Caring - Who Cares?
  - Scoping review - Young Women's Health.

# Policy



- Women's Health Interest Group in the EU Parliament.
  - Objective is to embed women's health in the work of the EU Parliament.
  - Women and mental health will be topic for discussion.
- Mapping Models of Good Practice in Women's Health.
  - 8 European countries: Austria, Belgium, England, France, Ireland, Scotland, Spain, and Sweden.
- EIWH Manifesto for Women's Health.
  - Includes the EU Commission Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health.
- **EU Strategy for Women's Health.**

# Education and Awareness – Health Literacy



- Understanding the biological and gender differences in how mental health conditions manifest and for treatment responses.
- A life-course approach to ensure women of all ages have access to the care they need.
- Impact of the social and the commercial determinants of health on mental health.
- Inclusion of sex and gender in healthcare professional education.
- Co- Creation and awareness raising of mental health and wellbeing among women themselves.
- EIWH and EPA have signed an MOU to work together on gender and mental health



# Thank You

## For more information:



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