

# Charting Future Directions in Gender, Sex and Health Research: Locating the Women's Health Agenda



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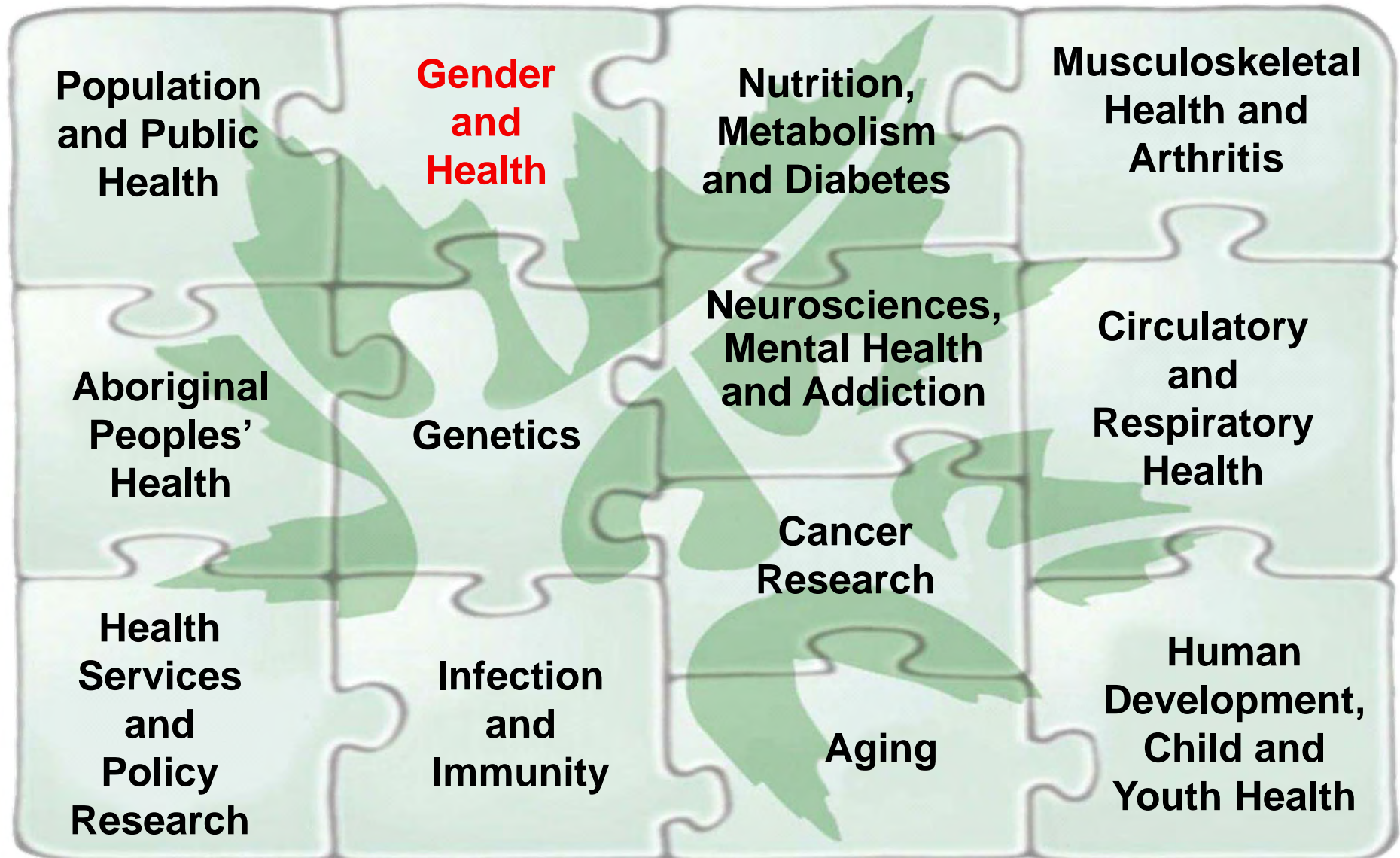
Institute of Gender and Health /  
Institut de la santé des femmes and des hommes

Canadian Institutes of Health Research /  
Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada



# Our Structure

## 13 Virtual Research Institutes



# CIHR - Institute of Gender and Health

- Unique in the world
- Grew out of the activism of the women's health "movement"
- CIHR 2000: Sex, Gender and Women's Health (Greaves et al.)
  - Three options (gender mainstreaming, sex and gender specific approach, women's health research institute)

# Looking Behind the Question: Why Women's Health?

- Motivated by a perspective that targeting resources to women is “preferential”
- Men's health concerns have been ignored
- Mortality rates (men die at a younger age)
- Social determinants other than gender are viewed to be more significant
- Women's health occurs in a social context and is influenced by men's health and behaviour

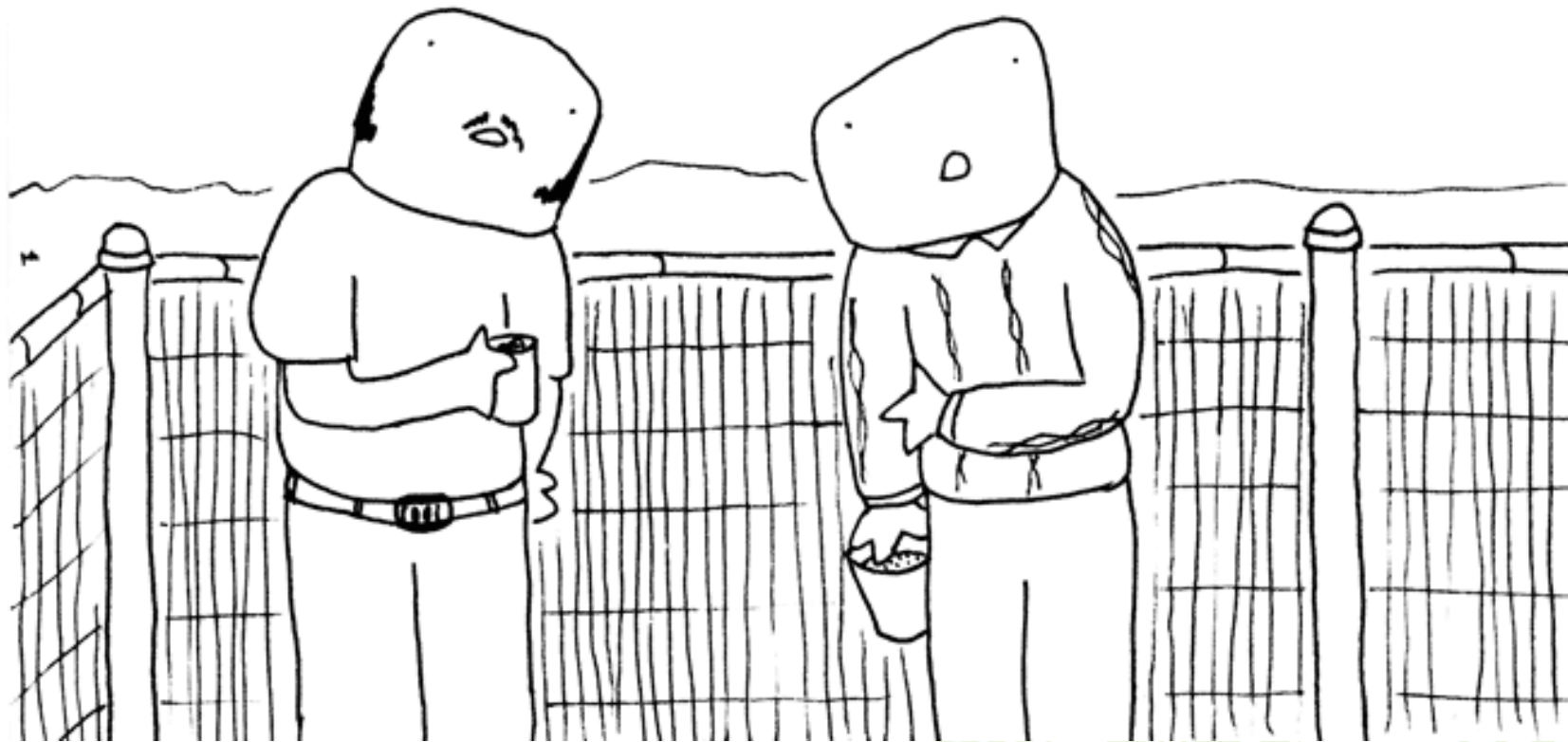
## Avoiding “gender wars”

- Women’s and men’s health both deserve attention
- Patriarchy is not good for anyone’s health
- The “us” versus “them” positioning is not productive

*This does not mean that the women’s health agenda has to disappear*

man, those feminists are  
fulla crap... we should start  
the National Organization  
for Men

we already have  
one of those... it's  
called the government



# The tendency to trivialize women's health (some personal experiences)



- Barbie's 50th birthday
- The health effects of wearing high heels



# Key Women's Health Issues Remain Unsolved

- Cancer (Cervical, Breast, Uterine, Lung)
- Heart Disease
- Unwanted Pregnancy
- Infertility
- STI's, HIV and other infections
- Addiction
- Violence
- Physical Inactivity



## The “Know-do” gap remains a persistent problem

- Women are less likely to access critical care treatment (Fowler et al., 2007)
- Anticoagulants are underused in the treatment of women with atrial fibrillation (Humphries et al., 2001)
- Women need higher dosages of statins to receive the same benefits as men (Pilote et al., 2007)



# What is driving the research agenda in Canada?

## Science and Technology Innovation Council

- Environmental Science and Technologies
- Natural Resources and Energy
- **Health and Related Life Sciences**
- Information and Communications Technologies

# Health and Related Life Sciences (sub priorities)

- Regenerative medicine
- Neuroscience
- Health in an aging population
- Biomedical engineering and medical technologies

## The good news.....

- Gender-Based Analysis is an integrated policy tool
- The use of GBA is monitored. Federal units are expected to comply with the policy

*“It is the responsibility of departments and agencies to ensure the completion of a thorough analysis of proposed policies and programs, including application of GBA and inclusion of gender considerations.”*

- The Auditor General of Canada is currently conducting an audit to review Canada’s implementation of GBA.

Every cell is **sexed**...

Every person is **gendered**....



# The Implications of Sex and Gender

- The health of the population
- Morbidity and mortality (disease and death rates)
- Health care delivery and policy



# Understanding Sex and Gender Differences in Health Outcomes

- Neither biological (sex) nor gender explanations fully account for the differences in men's and women's health
- An understanding of how these factors combine to affect the health of men and women is not fully developed



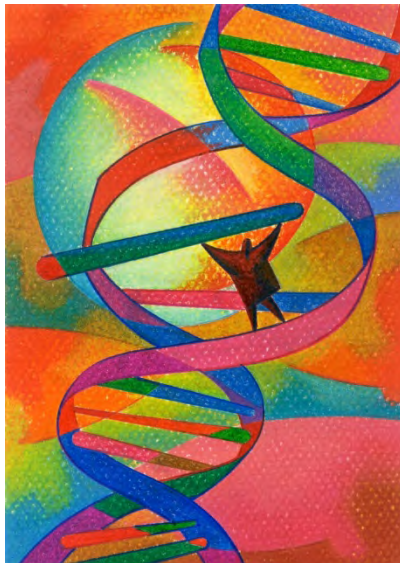
# IGH Mission

- To foster research excellence in the development and application of new knowledge regarding the influence of gender and sex on the health of women and men throughout life.



## Platforms for *Success*

- Research Chairs – Gender, Sex and Health
- Research Teams – Gender, Sex and Health



- Centres for Research Development in Gender Mental Health and Addictions

# Strategic Planning for IGH

- Regional Consultations
- Key Informant Interviews
- Document review
- Strategic Planning Workshop with Institute Advisory Board.

# Criteria for Strategic Directions

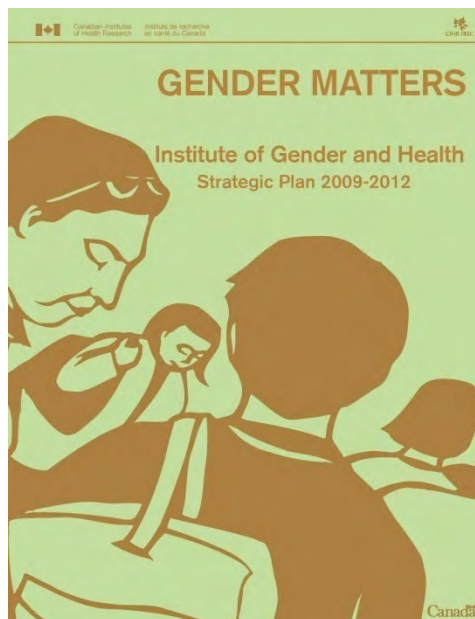
- Address critical gender and health issues identified by stakeholders
  - Reflect, support, and build on Canada's gender and health research strengths
  - Have strong potential for significant impact on the health of Canadians through research
  - Help to bridge gaps between the current gender, sex and health research situation and the IGH vision
  - Have strong potential for partnerships that leverage CIHR and IGH intellectual capital and resources.
- priority

# Strategic Research Directions

- advancing methods and measures
- building partnerships in gender and health

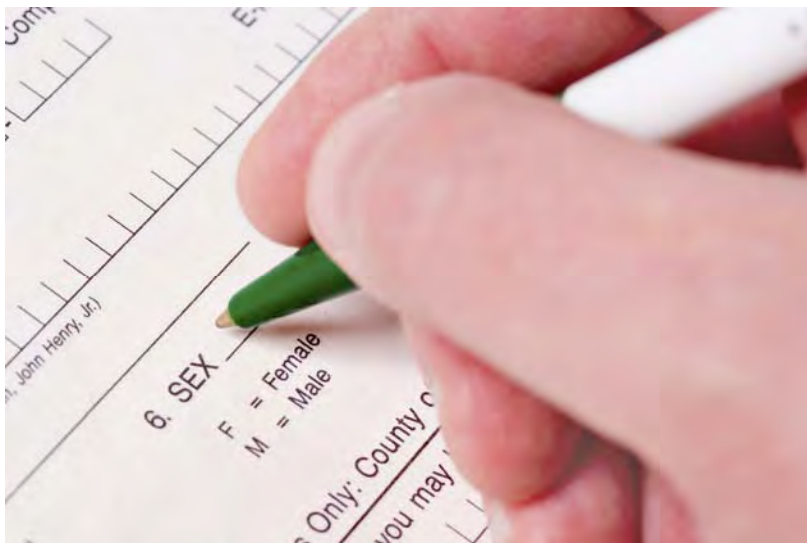
## Priority topic areas

- violence and health: impacts and implications
- sexual and reproductive health: improved decision-making
- clinical interventions: enhancing effectiveness
- work and health: research into action



# Advancing Methods and Measures

- The field requires methodological innovation
- How can we capture the effects of gender?



- How can we move beyond simple sex disaggregation of data?
- Workshop January 29th and 30th

# Building Partnerships in Gender and Health

Work with other Institutes and NGOs to examine specific issues related to sex, gender and health



- Aging
- Mental health
- Health promotion
- Health services

# *Violence and Health* Impacts and Implications

- The reach of violence in our society is pervasive and has many manifestations that include sex and gender dimensions.
- The challenge is to support research that will result in effective, evidence-based interventions focused on violence and health.





# *Sexual and Reproductive Health:* Improved Decision Making



- The challenge is to improve our understanding of the sex and gender aspects of sexual and reproductive health and to develop appropriate interventions that can support healthy sexuality and reproductive decision making.

## *Work and Health: Research into Action*



- Work roles and workplaces are highly gendered.
- The challenge is to improve understanding of sex and gender considerations related to work and their implications for health.

# *Clinical Interventions:* Enhancing Effectiveness

- Sex and gender are inadequately considered in relation to clinical interventions (drugs, devices, diagnostics, and clinical programs)
- The challenge is to ensure that clinical interventions are accessible, appropriate, and effective with respect to sex and gender.



## *Toward Better Health for Women*

- The IGH Strategic plan is strongly aligned with women's health
- We need to continue to make the case that sex and gender are important considerations in health research
- The science of sex and gender in health is exploding, there is increasing recognition that one size does not fit all.

## *Building on a strong foundation*

- There is a strong cadre of women's health researchers in Canada and Internationally
- There are a number of organizations that are advancing women's health
  - Centre's of Excellence for Women's Health
  - Women's Health Institutes
  - International Organizations
- "It is time for a more robust plan for addressing women's health in Canada." (Greaves)

Merci!  
Commentaires?  
Questions?

