

The term “sex”/Introduction

Biological elements such as chromosomes, reproductive organs and specific hormones affect the expression of phenotypic traits generally associated with female or male species and is described by the term “sex”.

It is important to not only consider the obvious physiological and anatomical sex differences (e.g. body size, body hair or primary sex organs), but also differences regarding genetics, hormone balance, immune system and metabolic profile. The biological basis of these differences results from an interplay between genes and sex hormones.^[1] This interplay ultimately leads to sex and gender differences in the risk profile, in the response to (drug) treatments or in the pathophysiological effects, among other things.^[2]

It is important to stress however that “sex” and “gender” are not separate entities. Rather, there is a lifelong interaction at the biological and social level, which plays a role in medicine for almost all disease processes.^[1]

Literature

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1. Kindler-Röhrborn A, Pfeleiderer B. Gendermedizin - Modewort oder Notwendigkeit?: - Die Rolle des Geschlechts in der Medizin. XX 2012; 1(03):146-52.
2. The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development, Gender and Health: Knowledge Agenda. Den Haag; 2015.

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