



Women's Bias in Healthcare: Addressing Gender Inequality

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DESCRIPTION

Gender bias in healthcare remains a significant challenge, impacting women's access to care, the quality of their treatment, and their overall health outcomes. While strides have been made in addressing gender inequality, women continue to face distinct barriers that hinder their ability to receive proper medical care. These barriers often arise from societal stereotypes, cultural norms, and systemic factors that undervalue women's health needs, leading to misdiagnosis, delayed treatments, and lack of proper care. To achieve true health equity, it is essential to recognize and address the biases that affect women's health and ensure they receive the care they deserve. Gender bias in healthcare is often deeply rooted in cultural and historical perceptions of women. In many societies, women's health concerns have been dismissed as emotional or trivial, reinforcing stereotypes that women's experiences of illness are less serious than those of men. Historically, women's symptoms were often attributed to "hysteria" or thought to be related to their reproductive health, regardless of the actual condition they were experiencing. For example, heart disease in women may go undiagnosed because the symptoms are often different from those typically seen in men, yet physicians may not always recognize these differences. This bias extends to how healthcare providers approach women's concerns. Women's pain is often underreported or dismissed by medical professionals, leading to misdiagnoses or inadequate pain management. Studies have shown that women are less likely to receive proper pain relief compared to men, particularly in emergency care situations. The assumption that women are more prone to emotional distress or exaggerating their symptoms has serious implications for the quality of care they receive. Women are more likely to be misdiagnosed or receive delayed diagnoses compared to men. A classic example of this

is in the field of cardiovascular disease. Women often exhibit symptoms of heart attacks that differ from the common symptoms observed in men, such as nausea, dizziness, and pain in the back or jaw rather than the chest. However, these symptoms are often misunderstood or downplayed by healthcare providers, leading to delayed diagnoses and poorer health outcomes. Another area where gender bias is evident is in mental health care. Women are disproportionately diagnosed with mood disorders, such as depression and anxiety, while conditions like substance abuse or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) may be overlooked. This can result in inappropriate treatments or a failure to address the root causes of mental health issues. The stigma surrounding mental health, particularly for women, can further prevent them from seeking help or receiving adequate care. Moreover, women's reproductive health has historically been marginalized or misunderstood. Conditions such as endometriosis, Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), and fibroids often go undiagnosed for years, as symptoms are minimized or dismissed. The lack of research and understanding in women's health issues has led to inadequate treatment options and a lack of support for women facing these challenges. Women also face health disparities due to structural and societal factors. Women, especially those from marginalized communities, often experience poorer health outcomes due to social determinants of health such as income inequality, lack of access to healthcare, and gender-based violence. Women of color, in particular, face compounded biases that affect their access to care. Systemic racism within healthcare systems can lead to disparities in treatment and outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and Latina women.

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