

Abstract

*Prof.dr. Toine Lagro-Janssen, Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre
Department of Primary Care and Community Care, Women's Studies Medicine*

From same bodies to gender matters

By focusing on three persistent principles operative in medicine, I will demonstrate why the topic of gender has difficulty securing a place for itself in medicine. First of all, there is the principle of neutrality, which causes gender differences to be ignored (gender blindness). Second, there is the principle of uniformity, with the male perspective being dominant and being considered the standard and the female perspective being neglected and being considered deviant (andronormativity). Norms in medicine, like those involved in pathologizing physiological phenomena, are also the products of the dominant male perspective. Third, the prevailing concept of illness is of a predominantly biomedical kind, which is an impediment to the study and practice of gender because an integrated concept of illness would be much better positioned to study bio-psycho-social aspects of gender and health in a coherent, mutually reinforcing manner.

Finally, I will indicate how integrating gender-specific knowledge, heightening gender awareness, and breaking through gender stereotyping are important preconditions for establishing gender-specific medicine.