



Health Systems to Blame for the Earlier Death of Men Across Europe

- **Late diagnosis is a common denominator of earlier deaths in men across Europe**
- **Health systems must take account of different needs of men and women**
- **Opening hours, undue bureaucracy and perceived emphasis on women are the most important criticisms**

European Health Forum Gastein 2007, Austria. A “guilty” verdict for the European Health system was the outcome of a simulated “court case” at the European Health Forum Gastein, the European Union’s leading congress in health politics. The jury of health professionals, NGOs and policy makers sought to identify responsibility for the early death of men across Europe. They incriminated the variations of emphasis by member states on early diagnosis, as well as the “one policy fits all” approach when it comes to men’s health.

At the European Health Forum Gastein the EMHF (European Men’s Health Forum) workshop aimed at bringing to the attention of a greater number of EU governments and other stakeholders the fact that late diagnosis is a common denominator of earlier deaths in men across Europe. Taking account of men and women’s specific health needs, the development of policies and services must tackle poor health literacy and late presentation for the sustainable improvement of LTHC outcomes. Taking cancer as an example, the recent EURO CARE IV study demonstrated that overall survival for all cancers combined was significantly higher in women than in men.

Awareness of men’s health among European governments varies widely. The male survival rate is lowest in East European countries and in the UK in Western Europe. In the UK, for instance, men under the age of 45 are much less likely to visit their doctor than women. A survey of men conducted by the Men’s Health Forum (England and Wales) suggested that many men are unhappy with the service provided for reasons that are rectifiable: unhelpful business hours, perceived emphasis on services for women and children, and undue bureaucracy.

So, the jury returned a verdict on men being less guilty than the health systems meant to support them. To improve male health, in fact, specific actions rather than a “one policy fits all” approach are needed. The development of public health policies and services should take account of evidence that men and women have different needs, experiences, concerns or priorities. By fully integrating an awareness of male and female health needs strategically and operationally, the EU gender mainstreaming agenda can actively promote equality and improved health outcomes for men and women.

Further information:

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Additional press information on the EHFG and pictures can be found at www.ehfg.org