



Media Release

Thursday 10th June 2010

Women's health advocates call for Australian clinical guidelines to ensure equal representation of women in medical trials.

Women's health policy experts and advocates have called for the Australian Government to introduce clinical guidelines to ensure that medical research being conducted in Australia takes account of gender differences.

The publication of three articles in the respected international science Journal, Nature has given profile to the fact that in the majority of animal and human medical studies, male subjects are used, leading to medical practices that are not necessarily healthy for women.

Executive Director of Women's Health Victoria, Ms Marilyn Beaumont, said today that the lack of focus on women's health and illnesses by the mainstream scientific and medical community had long been documented, but the Nature Journal highlighted a real ongoing danger for women being subjected to clinical practice based on scientific evidence that is not proven for half the world's population.

"The lack of representation of women in clinical trials, and of female animals in scientific research is contributing to medical practice that may be doing more harm than good for women," Ms. Beaumont said.

"It leads to guess-based medicine rather than evidence based medicine for women. For example, many drug trials are based on average male weight – say 80kg, then this dose is administered to a woman of 55kg, then it's pretty obvious that a woman may be receiving a higher dose than is clinically therapeutic."

"The research published in Nature shows that many scientific researchers exclude female participants because of the impact of hormonal changes to the trial. You would think that impact of female hormones would actually be central to the testing any clinical outcome."

Ms. Beaumont today called for new Australian guidelines for trials to be developed, ensuring that both women and men have been included in clinical trials.

"It is clear we need new guidelines and that these guidelines need to be enforced when funding is being granted for medical and scientific trials," Ms Beaumont said.

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