

SEX AND GENDER EQUITY IN RESEARCH (SAGER). Implications of the SAGER reporting guidelines for research integrity

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Objective

To show how the SAGER reporting guidelines can contribute to research integrity.

Sex and gender differences are often overlooked in research across disciplines and there is confusion in the very use of terminology. This negatively affects research results and research integrity as a whole, limits research reproducibility and harms both men and women, besides representing an unfortunate and avoidable waste of resources. The guidelines address these issues by helping authors in the preparation of manuscripts and referees in the application of sex and gender considerations in the review process.

Methods

The **SAGER** guidelines, produced by a multidisciplinary panel within the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), were developed on the basis of 1) an online survey of 716 journal editors to map existing gender policies and the composition of editorial boards, peer reviewers and staff, 2) consultation of online articles, and 3) expert committee reports.

Results

The SAGER guidelines defined the following requirements for authors, editors and peer reviewers:

- **Appropriate use of terminology in journal articles submitted for publication to avoid confusion.**
- **Differentiation by sex and gender of any subject of research considered in the study to reveal any possible difference in the results, even if not initially expected. If such differentiation is not appropriate it should be explained.**

Further actions undertaken under a SAGER vision, such as training, dissemination, promotion of gender balance in editorial committees, are in progress.

Conclusions

Widespread adoption of the SAGER guidelines by journal editors is needed to address the issue of sex and gender underreporting in research, enhance research integrity, and promote responsible research and innovation.

Adoption implies that editors will be required to report sex and gender-disaggregated data, whenever applicable, in all the sections of journal articles from study design, to data analysis, results and interpretation of findings. The research community at the WCRI would benefit from a wider appreciation of their responsibilities in this regard in order to guarantee research integrity, maximize the use of resources and enhance the usefulness of research results at a global level and across disciplines.

References

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