



IMPACTING THE FUTURE OF DIABETES RESEARCH

Women's Xchange is a member of Diabetes Action Canada, a Strategy for Patient Oriented Research (SPOR) Network in Diabetes and its Related Complications.

By working with Diabetes Action Canada (DAC) team members, Canadian leaders in diabetes research, Women's Xchange leads the integration of sex and gender considerations throughout the network's research processes and products. Through our involvement with each of DAC's nine national research teams, we are helping to increase capacity and advance the future of diabetes research in Canada.

Q&A WITH DIABETES ACTION CANADA

1. Within the broader diabetes research landscape, do you feel that sex and gender considerations are fully incorporated?

The research projects developed by Diabetes Action Canada investigators are definitely incorporating sex and gender. We are most grateful for the outstanding collaboration with Women's Xchange and their commitment to working with our investigators on the incorporation of sex and gender considerations in the preparation and evaluation of their research proposals. As we build patient-oriented research capacity in our training programs, the collaboration with Women's Xchange experts has been most valuable in designing an inclusive curriculum.

In the broader diabetes research landscape, we are less certain about the inclusion of sex and gender considerations. More work is required to train all diabetes researchers in Canada to design their studies to be inclusive of sex and gender questions and evaluation. The education materials created by the Women's Xchange are excellent.

2. What are the current knowledge gaps within diabetes research related to sex and gender?

Three key knowledge gaps within diabetes research related to sex and gender are:

- Fundamental basic science using animal models – usually male (for consistency of “physiological status”) – the outcomes of which may not apply directly to females.
- Clinical trials – require deliberate design that includes sufficient numbers related to sex and gender to analyze results (subsets) and arrive at meaningful conclusions relevant to people of different sex and gender. This is improving in Canada – but we could do better.
- Pragmatic trials – real world analysis of new models of care require design and analytics that must be inclusive of sex and gender to understand relevance of interventions and iterative change necessary to create a true “Learning Health Environment” for the most vulnerable in Canada.

DIABETES ACTION CANADA'S MANAGEMENT TEAM

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3. What has your experience been with Women's Xchange? How has Women's Xchange impacted your work related to diabetes?

In our network, Women's Xchange has established a "sex and gender facilitator" model, whereby research programs designate one member of their group to be the point-person for regular communication with the Sex and Gender Program. Through this collaboration, Women's Xchange is transforming the landscape of our strategic patient-oriented research to enable all of our researchers and trainees to understand the importance of including sex and gender considerations in their projects. The major success factors include the training curriculum and hands-on consultation provided by Women's Xchange – at truly extraordinary collaborative contribution.

4. Can you share a bit about Women's Xchange and DAC's partnership and how Women's Xchange has become involved in DAC?

The CIHR SPOR program required the inclusion of sex and gender considerations in our original SPOR Chronic Disease Network application. We were extremely fortunate to recruit Dr. Paula Rochon as a primary investigator (PI) on our application. She and Robin Mason, worked with us from the outset on this application and subsequently joined our Operations Management Committee that meets monthly and includes all of our PIs, Research-Directed Goal Group and Enabling Program Leads – chaired by our Nominated Principle Investigator (NPI), Dr. Gary Lewis.

The Project Coordinator for Women's Xchange works closely with our Manager of Research Operations, Tracy McQuire, who meets monthly with all of our Project Coordinators. These meetings provide additional opportunities to disseminate research tools and education modules on sex and gender and to discuss collaboration and utilization of these resources. As new SPOR-related research projects are vetted by Diabetes Action Canada, Women's Xchange works with the PIs to ensure that sex and gender considerations are included in the grant proposal. Once a project is funded, Women's Xchange may continue to work as necessary with our investigators to ensure the design and analytics of the project fully incorporate sex and gender. We are extremely proud of this collaboration and have highlighted our collaboration with Women's Xchange in our annual reports to CIHR and our sponsors.

"Women's Xchange provides support to researchers in Ontario by consulting with scientists, reviewing and strengthening grant proposals to ensure that sex and gender are well-integrated into the study design. I know that I have reviewed grants that have successfully received funding and by highlighting sex and gender we can improve health outcomes at all levels."

– Amy Hoang-Kim, PhD, former Women's Xchange post-doctoral researcher

