

Women must be included in health R&D

SAHTAC (South Africa Health Technologies Advocacy Coalition) advocates for an enabling environment for research, development and access to life-saving health technologies and innovations for all.

It wasn't until 1993 that women were required to be included in most research studies. Studies that did include women were overwhelmingly related to reproductive science, showing a failure of the scientific community to recognise that the spectrum of a woman's health extends much further than her ability to have children.

The exclusion of women in research and other fields of health care was also due to the cycling of hormones which made them imperfect candidates for research, although hormones take place in men as well. Most research in the 20th century was done using young men. The implications of this lack of diversity are still felt today. Countless drugs still used have only been tested on men (unequal representation), leaving women susceptible to care that is less effective or even harmful.

This historical exclusion of women from research has not only affected our knowledge and mechanisms of certain drugs but also means that the scientific community is behind when it comes to other domains of women's health.

Moving forward, SAHTAC calls for health research and development to fill the gap of knowledge of our differences in biological sex, impact disease pathways and health outcomes.



Sizwe Nombasa Gxuluwe,
WACI Health Programs
Manager

“Advocating for domestic investment for Health R&D so that women and girls' access to focused HIV prevention education and technologies is realized.”



Carol Ruffell, DNDi GARDP
Southern Africa Head of Office

“I am privileged to lead a small, passionate and mostly female South African team that delivers on the DNDi and GARDP vision. We aim to improve the ability of health and R&D systems to deliver necessary treatments for neglected patients and those struggling with resistant bacterial infections and women are so often at the core and are the neglected patients. They are the backbone of the health systems and increasingly becoming leaders in innovation.”



"It is our collective responsibility to be empowering each other as change agents of making health interventions accessible to all women and their partners. Together we must amplify the voices of all women so that their health and social well being is optimized and they become advocates in their local community. "

Neetha Morar,
Senior Research Manager
HIV and other Infectious Diseases Research Unit (HIDRU)

