

Women's Health Care - 1991

The Jewish tradition tells us, "Save one person... save the world."

Issue

Women are short-changed in all aspects of health care, from research through prevention programs to delivery of services. The need to address these inequities is fundamental to women's rights in general. Moreover, increasingly women are in danger of losing their rights to reproductive health care.

Background

As described in major newspapers nationwide, as well as in medical journals, women have not been included in the research on specific illnesses and therapies, even when the results have subsequently been used to treat them. Thus, research has failed to take into account biological differences. For example, the Multiple Risk Factor Intervention Trials, which studied coronary heart disease risk factors, and a research project on the value of aspirin as a preventive therapy for coronary disease were both based on a male-only study population. Yet research points out that more women than men die of heart disease annually in the U.S. and that women receive less aggressive treatment and are less likely to receive highly sophisticated procedures and operations for heart disease, even when they are as sick as men.

Further, research and prevention programs for illnesses specific to women have received a smaller share of the resources dedicated to these areas than those for illnesses seen as more prevalent among men. Between 1979 and 1986, the death rate from breast cancer increased 24 percent, and one in nine women may now develop breast cancer in her lifetime. Funding for research into such areas as breast and gynecological cancer, menopause and estrogen therapy, anti-progesterone drugs and the testing of pharmaceuticals and other products including cosmetics for the safety of use by women is urgently needed.

Women are also affected by a host of other health-related issues which are not always viewed as such. These include the need for flexible work hours and family leave time, the availability of programs which provide relief to care-givers, as well as the availability of counseling concerning the full range of choices with regard to reproductive rights.

Resolution

The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods has previously established commitment to equal rights and equal opportunity for all people. NFTS, therefore, calls upon all United States Sisterhoods to:

1. Support passage of legislation such as the omnibus Women's Health Equity Act which corrects deficiencies in women's health care, including research, prevention and treatment.
2. Call for funding of programs which provide greater opportunities for gender-specific research in such areas as heart disease in women, fertility and infertility, breast/ovarian cancer, menopause, arthritis, osteoporosis, eating disorders, chemical dependency and women and children with HIV/AIDS.
3. Advocate programs which inform the medical establishment of the specific needs of women, including testing and evaluation of pharmaceutical products and procedures with women's needs in mind.
4. Affirm that ethical medical practice mandates that women be informed of all alternative medical therapies available for their care.
5. Reaffirm their support for continued funding for and unrestricted access to reproductive services and advice.

Further, NFTS urges its affiliates worldwide to study and act upon these issues as applicable in their countries.

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