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Dr. Shirin Heidari is Executive Editor of the Journal of the International AIDS Society. In 2012, Dr Heidari was appointed member of the Council of the European Associations of Science Editors, where she also serves as the chair of the Gender Policy Committee. She continuously advocates for a gender sensitive approach to research and programme delivery. As Executive Editor, she implemented an editorial policy which strongly encourages authors to disaggregate research data by sex and provide gender analyses in submitting manuscripts. Shirin has a Doctorate degree in Clinical Virology and Experimental Oncology from Karolinska Institute in Sweden. She completed her post-doctoral training with The European Vaccine Effort against HIV/AIDS and thereafter, she continued her research at the Centre of Excellence for Infectious Medicine at the Karolinska Institute. She has 10 years of experience in research and is the author of a number of publications.

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Making visible the invisible: sex and gender dimensions in scientific research and reporting

Sex and gender differences and similarities are too often unaccounted for in scientific research, although these variables can be important determinants of health and well-being. This also applies to disciplines other than health research. The impact of, for example, environmental contaminants, interventions and innovations cannot be fully assessed if sex and gender dimensions are not accounted for in research, and will not be known if they are not systematically reported. Editors of scientific journals play an important role as gatekeepers of science to ensure that research methodology is sound, data analysis is accurate, reported results are complete, and conclusions are balanced and firmly based on evidence. Ensuring that data reported are disaggregated by sex, and that results and conclusions take into account gender dimensions, should be an integral aspect of editors responsibilities.

In 2013, the Gender Policy Committee of the European Association of Science Editors launched an extensive international survey in order to map existing editorial sex and gender policies. The survey probed not only for current practices, but also for opinions regarding editorial sex and gender policies in scientific journals and publishing houses. In this presentation, Dr Heidari will present the sobering results of this survey, from which it is apparent that the vast majority of journals and publishing houses do not have explicit policies that foster routine gender- and sex-sensitive reporting or policies that address gender biases in the workforce. She will discuss the implications of these findings and provide examples of how appropriate policies can make contributions towards improved scientific rigour and evidence-based practices.