

International Journal of Men's Social and Community Health

Commentary

STRENGTHENING POLICY COMMITMENTS TO EQUITY AND MEN'S HEALTH

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Introduction

A recent commentary in the *Lancet* explained that COVID-19 has shined a cruel light on global policy inaction relating to men's health.¹ Similar sentiments were emphasized in a recent article about COVID-19, equity and men's health published in the *International Journal of Men's Social and Community Health*.² The men's health community already knows that equity-based men's health policy approaches are critical.¹⁻³ While advocacy of this nature has been evident over the past decade,^{4,5} there has been minimal evidence of action at national and global levels. COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement have both reinforced why ambivalence towards equity and men's health is no longer an option.^{1,2} The disproportionate mortality rates noted among men due to COVID-19^{1,2} and legal intervention (use of police force) are just two examples of the health and social inequities boys and men currently face.^{1,2,6} We recognize that girls and women also face patriarchy, unequal power relations, and other inequities that need to change.^{4,5} However, we also need to move beyond simplistic academic and policy discourses that fail to locate the roots of men's poor health in structural factors, and too often create an unproductive binary between men's and women's health.^{2,3,6} While a more gender-inclusive global health policy agenda is important and can help to advance gender-transformative approaches that can benefit both men and women,^{2,3} we also need to think more broadly. The health and social inequities experienced by boys and men are a consequence of multiple intersecting structural factors. Policy and practice approaches that address underlying social determinants of health - and which recognise the complex nexus between gender, race, socio-economic status, geography, age, sexuality, and disability - will best support the most marginalised and vulnerable populations of boys and men.^{2,3,6} Emerging national and international men's health policy approaches must address these intersections more explicitly and intentionally.

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