



Handbook for
GENDER EQUITY STANDARDS (GES)
for WONCA Scientific Meetings



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The vision of the WONCA Working Party on Women and Family Medicine (WWPWFM) is:

“to promote the role of women family doctors, to highlight their special contributions and reduce the barriers facing them, thereby enabling them to reach their full potential and enhance the contribution of family physicians/GPs around the world to clinical care, women’s health, education, research and leadership in family medicine.”

Orlando 2004

The GES Handbook

WONCA endorsed the *Gender Equity Standards (GES)* for its sponsored conferences, in 2010. The GES articulates a unique set of guiding statements designed to promote gender equity at WONCA scientific meetings. This Handbook is a basic guide to help conference organizers achieve these standards. It outlines the ten GES standards and the plan for implementation of these standards. The Handbook is a brief summary of the more comprehensive and annotated document called *The GES Guidebook 2017*, which includes more information on the history, details and rationale of each of the components of the GES, and is referenced in this brief Handbook. The Guidebook is accompanied by the *GES Checklist/ Scoresheet*. Both are available for free at gesguidebook.com, and can be downloaded and used as required.

Overview

In every country of the world, girls and women continue to endure systemic barriers, disadvantages and adverse treatment, including in the medical profession and in health care. A significant body of research indicates that gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment can have a profound effect on the achievement of sustained peace, development, human rights and sound relationships between the environment and human populations.

In WONCA, men and women family physicians are recognizing the challenges facing women and girls everywhere and are advocating for gender equality. Across the world, more women than ever before are becoming doctors, yet barriers persist to their full participation.

Led by the WONCA Working Party on Women and Family Medicine (WWPWF), WONCA has acknowledged the ongoing challenges facing women and women doctors, and its responsibility to promote gender equity around the world. WONCA has shown its commitment to these values through endorsing the following policies at WONCA World Council:

- *The Hamilton Equity Recommendations (HER) Statement in 2007*
- *The 10 Steps to Equity in Health in 2007*
- *The WONCA (Gender Equity) Bylaws 2010*
- *The Gender Equity Standards for WONCA Scientific Meetings (GES) in 2009*

WONCA additionally has set up an Organizational Equity Committee through the Bylaws passed in 2010, specifying additional arenas in which other forms of equity (e.g., age, language accessibility, urban/rural, religious and cultural beliefs) must also be addressed in scientific meetings and other WONCA activities.

Definitions¹

Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a “level playing field.” Equity leads to equality. Gender equity also means that health needs, which are specific to each gender, receive appropriate resources (e.g. reproductive health needs), and also recognize special needs relating to women’s greater vulnerability to gender-based violence.

Gender equality is the absence of discrimination on the basis of a person’s sex in authority, opportunities, allocation of resources and between benefits and access to services. It is therefore, the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and differences between men and women, and the varying roles that they play.

Gender awareness is the understanding that there are socially determined differences between men and women based on learned behaviour, which affect ability to access and control resources.

Gender sensitivity is the ability to perceive existing gender differences, issues and inequalities, and incorporate these into strategies and actions.

Gender blindness is the failure to recognize that gender is an essential determinant of social outcomes, including health. Gender blindness therefore affects appropriate assessment and management of health problems.

1 Medical Women International Association. Training Manual for Gender Mainstreaming in Health. 2002

<http://mwia.net/about/projects-and-publications/gender-mainstreaming-in-health/>

Gender Equity Standards (GES) (short version)

- 1. Committee structure.** All committees involved in planning and convening scientific meetings adhere to basic principles of gender balance and gender equity.
- 2. Program content.** The program incorporates gender equity throughout its implementation. All themes of the scientific meetings include a gender perspective or analysis. All calls for proposals for plenary, symposia, workshops explicitly request a gender consideration. No gender restrictions/bias in participation. Women's health topics are encouraged regardless of the theme for the meeting.
- 3. Gender balance.** All scientific committees plan for gender balance for invited speakers for plenaries, workshops and symposia.
- 4. Plenary speakers.** Deserving women are purposefully and proactively considered as speakers.
- 5. Bursaries.** The Host Organizing Committee or the bursary committee makes every reasonable effort to purposefully increase the pool of funds available, and distribute bursaries in a gender equitable fashion.
- 6. Leadership development.** Scientific committees make every reasonable effort to promote leadership development at each conference.
- 7. Family activities.** The Host Organizing Committee collaborates with participants who are parents in order to facilitate appropriate arrangements for accessible childcare for infants, toddlers and school-age children.
- 8. Social Events.** The Host Organizing Committee ensures that all social activities offered as part of the regular conference program are respectful of the gender, national origin, and ethnicity of participants and their guests, and that highly sexualized humour or events, and/or demeaning comments will not be tolerated.
- 9. Corporate sponsorship and marketing.** The scientific committee organizing WONCA meetings restricts external sponsors that conduct policy or market products that adversely affect women. Every effort is made to restrict imagery or products that objectify women or that make deceptive claims.
- 10. Interactive educational styles.** Scientific committees encourage invited speakers to adopt interactive teaching and learning styles, and include this encouragement in the calls for proposals for each meeting.

Policies and Procedures

WONCA policy on Gender Equity Standards can be found at globalfamilydoctor.com. The WONCA Conference Agreement requires that the GES is fully adhered to. (Section 4.d.: “Ensure that the WONCA Gender Equity Standards for WONCA Scientific Meetings are fully adhered to”.)

The standards apply to all WONCA international conferences and to other conferences that choose to implement the GES. These include but are not limited to WONCA Regional Conferences and WONCA Rural Conferences. The notable efforts made by conference organizers to adhere to the spirit of the agreement will contribute to the transformation of WONCA into a more gender equitable organization.

The GES Guidebook

The GES Guidebook outlines the steps required for WONCA sponsored conferences to implement the *Gender Equity Standards*. The Guidebook provides details about definitions, roles and responsibilities of the conference organizers and requirements to fulfill the agreement.

The GES Guidebook, GES Handbook, GES Checklist/Scoresheet and other related resources are available for free at: gesguidebook.com, and can be downloaded and used as required.

GES Compliance

GES compliance means that the conference organizers have adhered to the agreement by implementing the *CORE* Factors. Although fulfillment of the component Factors is not a requirement for compliance, implementation of these Factors will be acknowledged as examples of special efforts made to ensure the conference is gender equitable.

Implementation of GES

The process of systematically reflecting on and addressing the challenges is as important as meeting the requirements for compliance. As soon as possible after signing the conference agreement, the conference organizers should review the GES and work out which of the 10 standards will be easy, more challenging or difficult to implement. The organizers can contact the WONCA CEO to discuss any difficulties anticipated and/or seek out assistance from the WWPWFM Chair to address these challenges. The implementation process continues with with the conference planning and carries through the conference itself. After every conference a GES compliance report will be produced by WONCA with a summary of recommendations for consideration by the organizers of future conferences.

CORE and component Factors

Each GES includes one or more *CORE* Factors, which are the basic building blocks essential to fulfilling the intent of the standard. (see Table 1) Each GES has other component Factors in addition to the *CORE* Factors. Although fulfillment of these component Factors is not a requirement for compliance, implementation of these Factors will be acknowledged as examples of special efforts made to ensure the conference is gender equitable.

Documentation of CORE and Component Factors

The GES Guidebook explains the process of documentation for each *CORE* and component Factor. The GES Checklist/Score sheet includes a list of documents and reports to help assess whether each *CORE* and component Factor has been satisfactorily addressed. Questions about documentation and the post-conference compliance report will provide useful information for ongoing and continuous improvement for current and future WONCA conferences.

TABLE1: GES CORE Factors

GES 1:	Committee structure: There is gender balance in membership and leadership on the Scientific Committee
GES 2:	Program content: The theme of the Scientific Conference as explained in the background materials includes a gender perspective or analysis
GES 3:	Gender balance: The program for the conference reflects gender balance for invited speakers in plenaries, symposia, workshops, etc.
GES 4:	Plenary speakers: At least 50% of plenary speakers are women
GES 5:	Bursaries: The bursary application criteria and the Committee’s review process pay explicit attention to gender equity
GES 6:	Leadership: Each WONCA conference offers pre-conferences, workshops and/or seminars that highlight how gender affects leadership styles, opportunities, personal growth and development, and participation in organizations
GES 7:	Family activities: The conference organizers makes a reasonable effort to provide information on childcare options, parent-accompanied childcare activities, private space for breastfeeding and low-cost food and lodging options
GES 8:	Social activities: All social activities offered as the regular conference program respect the gender, national origin and ethnicity of participants and their guests
GES 9:	Corporate marketing, external sponsorship: 1. The conference organizers ensure that the sponsoring companies are compliant with recommendations that restrict imagery or products that objectify women or make deceptive claims. 2. The conference organizers ensure that the sponsoring companies are compliant with WHO International Code on Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes
GES 10:	Interactive educational style: Each conference offers interactive educational sessions

Submission Timelines

The GES Checklist/Scoresheet recommends the times for submission of relevant documents (Table 2).

TABLE 2: Submission Timelines

Timeline 1	At the time of the submission of the application for consideration as a conference by WONCA – more than 2 years before the conference
Timeline 2	2 years prior to the conference
Timeline 3	3 months prior to the conference
Timeline 4	During the conference
Timeline 5	After the conference

Who is Responsible for Submitting the Report, and to Whom Should the Report be Submitted?

The conference organizers or delegate (e.g. the Chair of the Host Organizing Committee (HOC) or the individual responsible for gender equity on the Scientific Committee) would submit the reports and documentation to the WONCA CEO for distribution to the appropriate committee or individual.

Suggested Steps to Follow When Submitting Documents to WONCA Regarding Implementing the GES

Conference organizers should proceed through the following steps as early as possible when considering hosting a conference:

1. Download the WONCA conference application forms and review the *Gender Equity Standards*.
2. At the time of submitting an application to host a WONCA conference, indicate how the conference theme will include a gender perspective (see GES 2).
3. If the application is approved, complete and submit the WONCA conference agreement. Please note section 4.d.: “Ensure that the WONCA Gender Equity Standards for WONCA Scientific Meetings are fully adhered to.”
4. Revisit the GES. Discuss which of the 10 GES will be easy to implement, which will be more challenging and which will be difficult. Discuss any concerns with the WONCA CEO and/or the WWPWFM Chair.

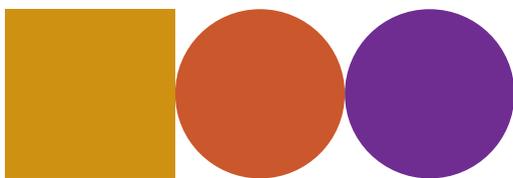
5. Download the *GES Guidebook, GES Handbook, GES Checklist/ Scoresheet* if more details are needed.
6. Submit additional recommended documentation as outlined in the GES Guidebook and GES Checklist/Scoresheet 2 years to 3 months prior to conference, with an emphasis on *CORE* Factors.
7. Re-submit any documentation requiring revisions.
8. After the conference, review the evaluations and submit a summary report to WONCA highlighting successes and challenges, and any recommendations for future conference planners.

Suggested Review Process

1. A committee or individual designated by WONCA will review the documentation submitted by the conference organizers.
2. Within 4 weeks of receiving the documentation, the WONCA designate will review the website and submitted materials and determine whether the requirements for GES compliance have been met or whether additional information is required.
3. Further information about the *CORE* Factors can be sent up to 6 weeks prior to the conference.
4. During and following the conference the WONCA designate will verify the documentation, and request any clarifications from the organizing committee.
5. Following the conference, WONCA will produce a final GES compliance report celebrating the successes at that conference and make recommendations for future conferences.

Acronyms used in the GES Guidebook

- **GES:** Gender Equity Standards
- **HOC:** Host Organizing Committee
- **NCQA:** National Committee on Quality Assurance
- **OEC:** Organizational Equity Committee
- **WHO:** World Health Organization
- **WONCA:** World Organization of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/Family Physicians
- **WWPWFM:** WONCA Working Party on Women and Family Medicine



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