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Health Inequalities: Are Perceptions of Morbidity Different Between Men and Women?

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López E, Findling L, Abramzón M. ¿Es diferente la percepción de morbilidad de varones y mujeres? [Health Inequalities: Are Perceptions of Morbidity Different Between Men and Women?] *Salud Colectiva* (Buenos Aires, Argentina) 2006 January- April; 2 (1): 61-74.

Objectives: To learn about inequalities in the perception of morbidity and health care among the population of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Methodology: Secondary analysis of data from a 2003 Ministry of Health survey on health services utilization and spending.

Results: The authors found inequalities associated with age and sex in the participants' perceptions. Differences in age, they state, are due to awareness of increased probability of illness and death as one moves through the stages of the life cycle. Differences in sex are attributed to the less favorable opinion women have about their health. The fact that women feel closer to health services and health service providers is explained by the doctor-patient-institution relationship established during pregnancy monitoring, childbirth, and health care for children and the rest of the family group. Data from the survey showed that men visit doctors less than women do. Men perceive their state of health more positively; the frequency of doctor visits increases with age in both sexes, and perception of one's state of health is more favorable with higher levels of education and schooling.

Conclusions: Mens' and women's health are different and unequal. Sex and age, in addition to distinguishing biological differences in determining health problems, constitute social, cultural, historical, political, and economic markers that may be interpreted from a gender perspective, in which differences in health can be explained taking their multidimensionality into account. The authors believe that more effective health programs and policies should be designed to reduce health inequalities between men and women.