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Overview

Equitable and gender-sensitive health care to women and girls living with or at risk of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is a challenge, specifically in accessing health resources that meet their needs, which can be complex. The objectives of this unique consortium are as follows: 1. To gather knowledge, attitudes and practices of healthcare providers towards FGM/C; 2. To identify the extent to which healthcare provider training packages incorporate the voices of women who have undergone FGM/C for efficient, culturally safe and gender sensitive training tools; 3. To contrast predictive models of risk estimates across partner countries; 4. To gain better understanding of best practices regarding policy implementations and legal frameworks with regards to the prevention of FGM/C; 5. To develop and pilot-test an informative video on defibulation by and for women.

Progress outcomes

The RHCforFGC diverse team is well on its way to reach four of its five work packages. The fifth one was completed after the second year. Deliverables are expected to be completed by March 2024. Below are some of the deliverables available so far:

- Adaptation for the Canadian context of the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) (Belgium / France, Canada, Switzerland) for physicians, nurses and midwives providing care to women and girls living with FGM/C in Canada;
- On-going Analyses of Reports of Estimates of Prevalence of Women living with FGM/C in European countries, Australia and USA for adaptation and replication of best practices in Canada;
- Interactive mapping of health and community services available for women and girls across Canada. Resource developed in collaboration with the Toronto-based NGO Women's Health in Women's Hands, through the Flourish Project: <https://flourishaccess.ca/map#hashLink> ;
- Workshop Series to build capacity of health care and service providers in Canada in collaboration with the Toronto-based NGO Women's Health in Women's Hands, through the Flourish Project: <https://flourishaccess.ca/map#hashLink> ;
- Informative videos (in French) on FGM/C from a clinical, sociocultural, psychosocial, legal and community perspective, as well as from women's perspectives. These videos were developed by the Quebec-based NGO RAFIQ (Réseau d'action pour l'égalité des femmes immigrées et racisées du Québec): <https://gender-net-plus.eu/rhcforfgc/>
- Informative video on defibulation, with and for women who have undergone an infibulation, intending to provide detailed, sensitive and accessible information on the procedure and associated implications before, during and after. The video has been developed by GAMS (Groupe pour l'abolition des mutilations sexuelles féminines) Belgium, a community-based organization in Brussels. It is available online and has been translated in nine languages (Afar, Amharic, Arabic, Dutch, English, French, Fula, Somali and Tigrinya): <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9osj8btP6Uc6lNCvrfmQdw/videos>

Selected Scientific Publications

Abdulcadir, J., Guedji, N. S., Yaron, M., Abdulcadir, O., [...]. Vissandjée, B. et Young, J. (2022). Assessing the Infant/Child/Young Person with Suspected FGM/C. Dans Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Children and Adolescents. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-81736-7_1

O'Neill, S., Richard, F., Vanderhoven, C. et Caillet, M. (2021). Pleasure, womanhood and the desire for reconstructive surgery after female genital cutting in Belgium. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 1- 18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13648470.2021.1994332>

Azadi, B., Tantet, C., Sylla, F. et Andro, A. (2021). Women who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting's perceptions and experiences with healthcare providers in Paris. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2021.1982010>

Hanberger A, Essén B, Wahlberg W. (2021). Attitudes towards male and female genital cutting in a Swedish Somali population. *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinava*, 100(4), 604-613. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aogs.14114>

Team members

	Woman	Man	Other
Gender balance in the whole consortium	110 (95%)	6 (5%)	0 (0%)
Presence of women as lead researchers/PIs	6 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Gender Experts in the team	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Subsequent team members trained (Gender equality and/or IGAR)	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Contribution to the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Tools and resources integrated recommendations identified in SDG 3 as well as SDG 5, namely, sensitive knowledge of personal and clinical trajectories of women and girls living with FGM/C, strategies to address communication barriers in order to provide adequate and timely information as well as referral to specialist clinics. Deliverables aim at promoting gender equality and empowerment for women and girls:

- Assessing knowledge of FGM/C, and whether healthcare providers are able to identify women's medical, psychological and social needs;
- Measuring what proportion of the overall number of healthcare providers have experience clinical interactions with women living with FGM/C;
- Describing how health and social services providers address and overcome communication barriers, information provision and referral to specialist clinics;
- Measuring how healthcare providers identify risk of FGM/C and respond to it.
- Identifying what healthcare providers perceive to be an indicator of risk of undergoing FGM/C;
- Identifying priorities in terms of training or knowledge gaps of the professionals concerned.

Differences/inequalities between women and men highlighted by the project:

All activities carried out within the five work packages accounted for gender-related contextual factors and gender norms in improving access to resources and health services specifically for women and girls living or at risk of FGM/C.

Positive impact of the project on gender equality/scientific evidence on gender in the field

Given the delicate and gender-related nature of the topic addressed in the RHCforFGC project, the five work packages are inherently addressing gender equality. Students, faculty, and community-based researchers are encouraged to participate according to their expertise and capacity to sustain the notion of gender throughout their respective projects. Narratives, qualitative measurements and legal discourse are all part of learning and capacity building strategies.

Socio-economic impact; involvement of policy makers/civil society

Within the framework of WP3, the team is working at respectfully analyzing previous reports of estimates of prevalence in order to do so for women and girls in Canada. Given that public health policies are developed based on relevant and timely data, an estimate of prevalence report will allow to claim support for sensitive and personalized programs as well as sustainable and coherent policies to better reach out and serve girls, women and families experiencing or at risk of FGM/C. It is expected that such a report, unique in Canada, will allow for transferability of evidence into clinical practice by improving clinical guidelines for quality interactions between healthcare providers and women and girls.