

Gender differences, morbidity and mortality. The Danish experiences. Register based analyses combined with reflections about stress as mediator of disease.

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Few countries have access to comprehensive data about all hospital contacts and thus to analyse gender differences in cause specific health care contacts in relation to gender differences in risk factors and mortality. Based upon data in the Danish National Patient Register and data from 1,689 Danish women and 1,392 Danish men between 45 and 55 years from different professional groups we analyse trends in morbidity among men and women in a context that consider gender specificity and gender differences in correlations between risk factors, morbidity and mortality. The trend in mean life expectancy in Denmark differs from comparable countries' and there are less gender differences in life expectancy than in most other OECD countries. The relatively low life expectancy is due to a higher mortality among 45-64 year-olds and can partly be explained by life style factors, primarily tobacco smoking. These factors may also contribute to the relatively small gender differences in cardiovascular diseases, lung cancer and chronic obstructive lung disease. However, a number of other factors related to female living conditions in Denmark may also explain gender differences in general morbidity and disease specific morbidity for example in autoimmune diseases and related conditions. The trend in morbidity and mortality among men and women in Denmark illuminates gender-specific differences in physiology and reactions to risk factors and contributes to knowledge about basic sex differences.