



Workshop 12

Intersex and work

Facilitator:
Miriam van der Have
(NNID, the Netherlands)

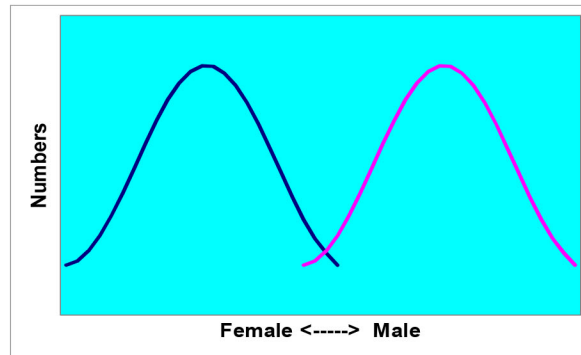


Miriam van der Have¹⁵ is executive director of the Dutch Network Intersex/DSD (NNID) and co-chair of OII (Organisation Intersex International) Europe¹⁶.

She starts the workshop by explaining that there is a growing acceptance for the idea that gender is not a dichotomy, but a continuum. But most people still consider sex as a binary system: either you have a male, or you have a female body. However, sex is also a continuum. Unfortunately, the major part of medical staff does still consider sex as a binary system.

She talks about her own condition and stresses that this is a condition, not an illness. Do not call me 'intersexual', she says. Don't call me 'hermaphrodite'. I do not want to be considered as a patient, or as someone with a disorder.

Most people think that the population only consists of female and male persons. At school we learn that females have the chromosome pattern XX, and males XY. We learn that the balance between hormones determines if someone is male or female. We learn that the genitals of males are clearly different from female genitals. But the population is actually built up in a different way.



Most of the people (the peaks in this graphic) are typically female or male, and some of them (left-hand side and right-hand side) are extremely female or male, but there is also an area in which the definitions do not apply (the middle part). Estimations of the part of the population that is in this category vary from 0,2 to 2 %.

Physicians consider this category of people abnormal and try to change their sex so that they clearly belong to the female or male group.

What most people do not know that there are people with chromosome combinations XXY and XO. That there are people who identify as women but do not have the reproductive organs that are considered to be female. At the moment more than 40 intersex conditions are described. There is more diversity in nature than most people think.

There is a difference in terminology: some are more inclined towards DSD = disorder in sex development, some more towards 'intersex status'. However, the influence of medical and psychiatric professionals is still

¹⁵ In January, 2017, Mariam van der Have received a Bob Angelo medal for her work – an award by the Dutch LGBTI organisation COC.

¹⁶ Web site: <https://oiieurope.org/>