

## Publication

“Waking up” the sleeping metaphor of normality in connection to intersex or DSD: a scoping review of medical literature

### JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

**ID** 4650495

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**Year** 2022

**Title** “Waking up” the sleeping metaphor of normality in connection to intersex or DSD: a scoping review of medical literature

**Journal** History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences

**Pages / Article-Number** 50

The aim of the study is to encourage a critical debate on the use of normality in the medical literature on DSD or intersex. For this purpose, a scoping review was conducted to identify and map the various ways in which “normal” is used in the medical literature on DSD between 2016 and 2020. We identified 75 studies, many of which were case studies highlighting rare cases of DSD, others, mainly retrospective observational studies, focused on improving diagnosis or treatment. The most common use of the adjective normal was in association with phenotypic sex. Overall, appearance was the most commonly cited criteria to evaluate the normality of sex organs. More than 1/3 of the studies included also medical photographs of sex organs. This persistent use of normality in reference to phenotypic sex is worrisome given the long-term medicalization of intersex bodies in the name of a “normal” appearance or leading a “normal” life. Healthcare professionals should be more careful about the ethical implications of using photographs in publications given that many intersex persons describe their experience with medical photography as dehumanizing.

**Full Text on edoc** ;

**Digital Object Identifier DOI** <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40656-022-00533-8>