



# Enhancing medical student clinical knowledge and communication skills in the care of LGBTQ patients

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## Background

Insufficient access to clinically and culturally appropriate care for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) patients perpetuates healthcare disparities for LGBTQ patients, highlighting the need for improved education of health care providers. In academic year 2020-2021, we offered an innovative approach to medical education on LGBTQ Health at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School using a multidisciplinary, virtual format for second-year students.

## Methods

The 7 total hours of educational activities included a recorded lecture, Zoom live lectures, and Zoom small group video-based dialogue session. The schedule also included two structured Zoom panel discussions, the first involving clinicians and public health experts from multiple disciplines, and a second panel composed of transgender patients (Table 1.)

The didactics focused on clinical affirmation of sexual orientation and gender identity, stigma-driven health disparities, sexual health, hormone therapy, and empowerment - including raising awareness about sex positivity, HIV prevention, and the U=U (undetectable equals untransmittable) campaign in ending the HIV epidemic (Table 2.)

Students completed an anonymous post-activity Qualtrics survey in which they evaluated their satisfaction with each of the educational components, as well as their confidence in achieving the stated learning objectives, on a 5-point Likert scale (1=hardly at all; 5=to a very high degree). They provided written feedback on the strengths and suggested improvements for the activities.

## Results

A total of 177 students participated in the activities, and 109 (62%) completed the voluntary survey. Each of the components were rated highly with respect to learner satisfaction, with means on the 5-point Likert scale of 4.31 to 4.39. Students also reported high confidence in achieving the stated learning objectives (means 4.12 to 4.21). Written feedback on strengths highlighted the rich and insightful panel discussions, the quality of the lectures, and the opportunity to have small group discussions. Suggested improvements included adding content on how to navigate patient and provider's religious beliefs and practices in caring for the LGBT population and having more sessions on LGBT Health during the clinical years.

## Coursework Summary:

Pre-work: Recorded lecture. The Gender Unicorn: Introduction to Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

### Day 1

- 75 minutes: Provider panel
- 90 minutes: Small group video-based discussion

### Day 2

- 90 minutes: Didactics
  - Lecture 1 - WSW Health
  - Lecture 2 - MSM Health
  - Lecture 3 - Transgender & Gender Non-Binary Health
- 75 minutes: Transgender patient panel

Post-assignment – 200-word short essay: In considering healthcare needs for LGBTQ+ individuals, what stood out to you as particularly important information or skills that you will carry with you into your future practice?

## Didactics Educational Objectives:

### Pre-Work Recorded Lecture

- Identify the differences and intersections between sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, differences of sexual development, sexual orientation, and sexual behavior
- Delineate better communication and clinical care practices for LGBTQ patients

### WSW Health

- Define women who have sex with women (WSW)
- Discuss health conditions that are more prevalent in WSW and how heteronormativity stigma plays a role in this
- Describe common misconceptions about WSW health risks

### MSM Health

- Describe unique health issues and disparities of men who have sex with men (MSM)
- Demonstrate better practices in creating safe and culturally competent spaces in the care of MSM patients
- Delineate the indications, benefits, and the impact of sexual health services for MSM

### TGNB Health

- Describe the health-related disparities among transgender and gender non-binary (TGNB) individuals
- Delineate key steps in developing a supportive, gender-affirming clinical environment for TGNB children, adolescents, and adults
- Outline approaches to holistic care for individuals of TGNB experience

Table 1: Mean student post-survey responses on confidence level in achieving the overall learning objectives, on a 5-point Likert scale

After this activity, I am confident with respect to my ability to:	Average Score (N=109)
Describe health-related disparities among LGBTQ+ populations	4.19
Delineate steps to creating supportive, affirming clinical environments for LGBTQ+ patients	4.21
Outline approaches to tailored and holistic clinical care for LGBTQ+ patients based on health needs	4.12
Demonstrate better practices for communication in the provision of high-quality clinical care for gender and sexual minorities	4.17
Additional training on this topic will be beneficial for my learning to become a good doctor	4.17

Table 2: Mean student post-survey responses on satisfaction with the educational components, on a 5-point Likert scale

Please evaluate this activity in terms of:	Average Score
Overall content	4.31
Didactics/Lectures	4.32
Effectiveness of the lecturers	4.33
Small Group Session	4.33
Effectiveness of the Small Group Facilitator	4.39
Provider panel	4.32
Transgender patient panel	4.31

## Conclusion

Our results demonstrate that a combination of traditional coursework with engaging, interactive panels in a virtual format can lead to high confidence among medical students in achieving key learning objectives related to LGBTQ healthcare. Additional research is needed to determine the long-term outcomes of this and similar educational activities in mitigating health disparities in the LGBTQ population.

## References

- 1) AAMC. Implementing curricular and institutional climate changes to improve health care for individuals who are LGBT, gender nonconforming, or born with DSD. A resource for medical educators. First edition, 2014.
- 2) McCann E, Brown M. The inclusion of LGBT+ health issues within undergraduate healthcare education and professional training programmes: A systematic review. Nurse Educ Today. 2018;64:204-214. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2018.02.028