Social and Structural Barriers Faced by Gender and Sexual Minorities in Obtaining Female Reproductive Healthcare

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The Problem
- Lesbian women are less likely to have health insurance and less likely to receive routine Pap tests compared to their heterosexual counterparts.¹
- Transgendered males were found to be less likely to receive preventative health services such as pap tests due to both lack of insurance and discrimination by healthcare providers.²
- Barriers may include:
  - Stigma and discrimination
  - Lack of compassion, sensitivity, and gender literacy by healthcare workers
  - Lack of health insurance
  - Misconceptions about risk in female bodied people who do not have sex with males
  - Language used by public health advocates regarding preventative care for female reproductive organs

Discrimination
42% of the transgendered males delayed seeking healthcare when injured or sick, and nearly half (48%) delayed seeking preventative health services due to discrimination by healthcare providers.²

Gender Literacy
Training medical professionals in understanding unique health concerns in the LGBTQ population, and how to be sensitive to those concerns, is an important tool in reducing discrimination and healthcare disparities.
Medical students with increased clinical exposure to LGBTQ patients³:
- Perform more comprehensive histories
- Hold more positive attitudes toward LGBTQ patients
- Possess greater knowledge of LGBTQ health care concerns

An easy way to conceptualize important differences between a person’s gender identity, sexual orientation, biological sex, and gender expression is by using a genderbread person:

Trans* (with the asterisk) is used as an umbrella term to indicate a variable and dynamic definition of identity, including anyone that identifies on the transgender spectrum, those who consider themselves bi- or multi-gendered, and those who do not identify with any labels.⁴

Mazzoni Center
- Provides quality and comprehensive health and wellness services for the LGBTQ community in Philadelphia and surrounding regions.
- Continuum of services provides a safe space that respects the dignity of all individuals they serve.
- Focuses on a compassionate model of care to improve their patients’ quality of life.
- Women’s Health Initiative stems from a national grant – RHEDI (Reproductive Health Education In Family Medicine) – seeks to increase training of family medicine residents in reproductive health procedures.
- Residents are trained to provide compassionate and culturally sensitive care, including pap testing, more advanced GYN care, and medication abortions, to LGBTQ patients.

References