
Providing Gender-Affirming Care to LGBTQ Patients in Hospital Units

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You'll often work with patients who are part of the LGBTQ community. To make sure your care is informed and supportive, keep these points in mind:

Cultural Sensitivity

- Always ask for and use patients' preferred pronouns and names. You can say, "I want to ensure I address you correctly. What name and pronouns do you prefer to use?"
- Stay up to date with LGBTQ terminologies:
 - Cisgender: Gender is aligned with sex at birth.
 - Gender Expansive: A term that emphasizes the fluidity and individuality of gender.
 - Gender Queer: Not adhering to the gender binary. Can also indicate sexual attraction.
 - Nonbinary/Nonconforming: Does not identify strictly as masculine or feminine.
 - Queer: An umbrella term that can be used to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression that does not conform to dominant societal norms.
 - Transgender: A discrepancy between a person's sex recorded at birth and their gender.

History Taking

- Make sure electronic health records reflect the patient's preferred name and pronouns.
- Use gender-neutral language, such as "partner" or "relationship status."
- Ask about a history of discrimination, violence, or other trauma. "Sometimes experiences of discrimination or trauma can have a big impact on our mental health. Have you had any experiences like this that you feel comfortable sharing with me?"
- Include questions about past or future gender-affirming treatments, e.g. "Can we talk about any medical treatments or procedures that you've undergone or are considering, such as hormone therapy or surgeries? Only share what you feel comfortable with."
- Pay extra attention to LGBTQ youth, who may be dealing with family rejection or homelessness. You can ask, "How has your experience been with your family regarding your gender identity or sexual orientation?"
- Be cautious about privacy. Some patients may not be "out" to family or friends. You can say, "Your privacy is very important. Is there anyone in your life who is unaware of your gender identity or sexual orientation that I should be mindful of when discussing your care?"

Environmental Accommodations

Talk to nonbinary patients about their room preferences, without making assumptions based on their sex at birth. Offer private or unisex bathroom facilities when possible.

Gender Transition-related Health Care Management

- Continue hormonal treatments for transgender patients during their hospital stay unless there's a medical concern (e.g., a heightened risk for thromboembolism in a bed-bound patient)
- Watch for interactions with other medications, like lithium and spironolactone or carbamazepine and estrogen.
- You might be asked to provide a letter of support for a patient's gender-affirming treatments.
- Familiarize yourself with resources for patients seeking or undergoing gender transition, e.g. therapists, endocrinologists, and support groups.

Combating Stigmatization

Strive to maintain an environment where LGBTQ patients feel supported by promptly addressing any forms of bias or prejudicial conduct.