

LGBTQ-Savvy Medical School Curriculum: What (Patients Think) Doctors Should Say and Do

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Problem: Health disparities in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities have yet to be adequately addressed by medical education; in response, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has created a list of competencies, which would drive creation of curriculum to prepare providers to care for these communities. No studies have formally vetted these competencies with LGBTQ patients.

Purpose: We seek to understand the knowledge, skills, and attitudes LGBTQ patients believe doctors should have in order to take care of them and to obtain LGBTQ patients' feedback regarding the competencies created by the AAMC.

Methods: We have conducted four 1-2 hour focus groups and are planning two more with LGBTQ people regarding the attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors that would best prepare doctors to work effectively with LGBTQ patients and feedback regarding the AAMC's LGBT-related competencies as outlined in "LGBT & DSD-Affected Individuals – Anthology and Curriculum Collection: A Call for Submissions." Focus groups were held at the Translating Identity Conference, a transgender conference at the University of Vermont, at RU12?, an LGBTQ community center in Burlington, Vermont, the LGBT Center in New York City, and a private home in Oakland, California. Upcoming groups are planned for Washington, D.C.. Focus groups were recorded and transcribed and will be analyzed using Grounded Theory. Themes identified will be used to make recommendations regarding the AAMC competencies to ensure they are relevant to LGBTQ patients and both specific and comprehensive regarding common difficulties with providers that perpetuate health disparities in LGBTQ communities.

Outcomes: LGBTQ patients have identified concerns – including the gate-keeping role of providers for prescription of hormone therapy, language used by providers during exams, and language used to train providers that marries anatomy and gender identity – not currently addressed by AAMC competencies.

Benefit: Themes identified in the focus groups may be used to consider revising competencies to ensure comprehensiveness and relevance to LGBTQ communities. Additionally, we believe the focus groups and resultant curricular changes will empower LGBTQ patients and improve relationships between patients and providers.

References:

Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). LGBT & DSD-Affected Individuals – Anthology & Curriculum Collection: A Call for Submissions. 2012

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Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA). 2011. Healthy People 2020 Companion Document for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health. San Francisco, California: Gay and Lesbian Medical Association.