Qualitative Definitions of LGBTQIA+ Inclusivity in the Colorado Healthcare Environment

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INTRODUCTION

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender diverse, intersex, asexual, and many other sexual and gender minorities form the broader LGBTQIA+ community
- Despite national improvements in LGBTQIA+ healthcare, local governmental policy and public attitudes influence this community’s health.
- Transgender and gender diverse patients bear the burden of worse health outcomes in this group.
- One Colorado Education Fund (OCEF) is the state’s leading LGBTQ+ advocacy organization.
- OCEF conducted the first healthcare needs assessment for the community in 2014, citing further inclusivity needs in the following areas:
  - Physician comfort with sexual and gender minorities
  - Intake appointments and paperwork
  - LGBTQIA+ medical knowledge
  - Medical office and waiting room environment
  - Inclusive language during patient interview
- This study was reviewed and approved by COMIRB, protocol #18-1017

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- Qualitatively define LGBTQIA+ inclusive healthcare in Colorado based on community-identified needs
- Create and make available physician education and patient empowerment resources that center the LGBTQIA+ experience and patient voice

METHODS

- Recruitment conducted via grassroots community organizers throughout the state, online postings, and One Colorado network
- Focus groups used semi-structured format to further define community-identified needs (see above)
- Inclusive and safe spaces for focus groups identified by local LGBTQIA+ community leaders
- Transcripts and focus group notes were analyzed by 3 of the authors, who then cross-coded each other’s work into thematic categories
- Focus Groups took place in Summer 2018 in Denver (n=4), Colorado Springs (n=10), Ft. Collins (n=7), and Grand Junction (n=8)

RESULTS

Identified Needs

- Inclusive Healthcare Providers
  - Intentional language use, especially pronouns and chosen name
  - Comfort with sexual history and exam, mirroring preferred gender language
  - Behaviors modeling humility, open-mindedness, and respect

- Assessing Provider Competency
  - Expansive fund of medical knowledge, including gender-affirming care
  - Provider connection with LGBTQIA+ community at-large
  - Credentials for LGBTQIA+ specific training

- Inclusive Healthcare Environment
  - Comprehensive intake forms with non-gendered language
  - Comfortable and private waiting rooms
  - LGBTQIA+ symbolism present, such as posters, magazines, and rainbow flags

Notable Participant Quotes

- "Perceptions change, words change, the LGBTQIA+ community changes...it’s important to keep up with your patients and how respecting them changes through time."
- "What you’re going to tell us will never matter as much as how you tell us."
- "All the [staff] had rainbow lanyards with pride pins and pronoun pins...automatically, you know you can trust that person."

DISCUSSION

- Majority of focus group discussion centered around the transgender and gender diverse patient experience, highlighting the inequities this sub-group faces
- Strong participation in non-urban areas may be due to close-knit community structures in these areas or due to poor recruitment in urban areas
- Strengths: project designed and implemented by LGBTQIA+ community members, strong participation by gender minorities, wide diversity of sexual identity
- Limitations: over-representation of white, young adults, technology issues leading to inability to transcribe two focus groups

CONCLUSIONS

- Patients cite a wide variety of recommendations to create a more inclusive healthcare environment
- Focus group data were used for the creation of nineteen provider education materials and patient empowerment resources, which can be found at the following:
  - https://one-colorado.org/lgbtq-resources/lgbtq-hea...-for-providers
  - https://one-colorado.org/lgbtq-resources/health-re...-for-lgbtq-patients
- Future patient focus groups may take place following the most recent health needs assessment by OCEF or may focus on other sub-groups and intersectional identities within the LGBTQIA+ community

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