

*Project Title:* **Teaching Medical Students to Provide Affirming Care for LGBTQ Patients**

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**BACKGROUND:** There is increasing recognition of the need for health care providers to provide affirming care to persons who are LGBTQ<sup>1-3</sup>. On October 6, 2015, the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)<sup>1</sup> and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC)<sup>2</sup> announced that they will require that all electronic health record (EHR) systems certified under the Meaningful Use incentive program have the capacity to collect sexual orientation and gender identity (SO/GI) information from patients. The CMS final rule indicates that “CMS and ONC believe including SO/GI in the ‘demographics’ criteria represents a crucial step forward to improving care for LGBTQ communities.”<sup>4</sup> Yet the role of medical schools in ensuring students and residents are trained to provide affirming care continues to lag<sup>5-7</sup>. While there has been an increasing call for health care professionals to provide culturally appropriate care for LGBTQ patients, the teaching of future primary care providers how to provide affirming care is largely lacking in medical school curriculum<sup>5-7</sup>.

A 2009-2010 survey administered to medical school deans about LGBTQ related content in medical education found that the median reported time dedicated to LGBTQ-related topics was small (e.g. 5 hours) and that the quantity, content covered, and perceived quality of instruction varied substantially<sup>8</sup>. While there is an increasing number of medical residency specialty and sub-specialty programs, including OB/GYN, Urology, and Surgery that have identified the need for residents to receive training in affirming care for transgender patients<sup>8-12</sup> little curriculum time of medical schools currently is allotted to addressing the unique, affirming needs of other LBGQ patients<sup>13</sup>.

**METHODS:** The research will be undertaken through three goals. The first goal is to conduct a systematic review of the literature on how medical students and residents are being taught to provide affirming care to LGBTQ patients. The second goal is to develop and administer a survey to assess the extent to which health care providers at community health centers are providing affirming care and barriers to implementation. This goal seeks to develop and administer a survey of health care providers at targeted community health centers to ascertain their level of knowledge, attitude, and awareness of affirming care and barriers to care. The survey will be conducted as a cross sectional study of knowledge, attitudes and awareness of health care providers at CHCs about affirming care for LGBTQ patients, the extent to which it is practiced in their clinic, and barriers to implementation. The third goal is to translate and broadly disseminate research findings as curriculum recommendations for medical schools, residency programs, and practicing health care providers.

**IMPLICATIONS** There is increased awareness of the need for health care professionals to provide culturally appropriate health care to all patients, including those who are LBGTQ. Yet, knowledge, attitudes and level of awareness of how to provider affirming care to LGBTQ patients is woefully deficient. Medical education curriculum needs to be revised to include the core

elements of affirming care for LGBTQ patients. Affirming, curriculum modules will be developed, evaluated, and disseminated to health professions educators and advocates for LGBGQ health.

## **RESEARCH DESCRIPTION**

### **Title: Teaching Medical Students and Residents to Provide Affirming Care for Patients who are LGBTQ**

**Statement of the problem** Medical students and residents currently lack sufficient training on affirming care to patients who are LGBTQ and how to provide it.

There has been an increasing call for health care providers to provide culturally appropriate, affirming care to persons who identify as LGBTQ<sup>1-3</sup>. On October 6, 2015, the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)<sup>1</sup> and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC)<sup>2</sup> announced that they will require that all electronic health record (EHR) systems certified under the Meaningful Use incentive program have the capacity to collect sexual orientation and gender identity (SO/GI) information from patients. The CMS final rule indicates that “CMS and ONC believe including SO/GI in the ‘demographics’ criteria represents a crucial step forward to improving care for LGBTQ communities.”<sup>4</sup> Yet the role of medical schools in ensuring students and residents are trained to provide affirming care continues to lag<sup>5-7</sup>.

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### **Target Populations**

- LGBTQ patients.

### **Research questions or hypothesis:**

1. What is the evidence base for health care professionals providing affirming care to LGBTQ patients in community health care settings?
2. What are the core elements of the medical educational curriculum that can be revised and adapted to ensure students have the knowledge and skills to provide culturally competent health care to LGBTQ patients?
3. Will inclusion of education on affirming care for LGBTQ patients result in improved knowledge and attitudes among medical students and residents?
4. Will inclusion of education on affirming care for LGBTQ patients result in perceived improvements in patient care and outcomes?

## WORK PLAN

The research will be undertaken through three goals. The first goal is to conduct a systematic review of the literature on how medical students and residents are being taught to provide affirming care to LGBTQ patients. The second goal is to develop an affirming care curriculum that can be taught to medical students and residents. The third goal is to broadly disseminate research results to medical schools, residency programs and practicing health care providers through traditional and non-traditional venues.

### **PROJECT GOAL 1: To conduct a systematic review of the literature to identify how medical students and residents are being trained to provide affirming care to LGBTQ patients.**

#### Methodology

- We will use PRISMA guidelines to conduct a systematic review of the literature from 2005 until present using Scopus, PubMed, Web of Science, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar and PsycINFO. A systematic review will be conducted according to PRISMA guidelines. The search strategy cross-referenced keywords for LGBTQ populations (*lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender identity, transsexual, gender reassignment, gender affirmation, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, gender dysphoria*, transgender non-conforming/TGNC) with keywords for medical students and residents (*medical student, medical resident*), and medical education (*medical school curriculum, basic science, clinical, rotations, OSCE, standardized patient*).

#### Analysis

- A systematic review of the literature will be conducted on how US medical school curricula addresses provision of affirming care for transgender patients using the PRISMA guidelines.

#### Anticipated Products

- We will present findings of the systematic review at a minimum of two professional conferences per year.
- We will submit a minimum one article for publication in a peer reviewed journal on how medical schools are teaching students and residents to provide affirming care to LGBTQ patients.

### **PROJECT GOAL 2: To work with our Community of Practice and national partners to develop and administer a survey to providers at community health centers about the extent and barriers to the provision of affirming care for LGBTQ patients.**

#### Methodology

- We will work with our consultants, the Fenway Institute, the Migrant Clinicians Network, and the National Health Care for the Homeless Council to develop and administer a survey to assess the extent to which health care providers at community health centers are aware of and are providing affirming care to LGBTQ patients. Core elements of affirming care will address a number of elements, including cultural

awareness, staff training, waiting areas, bathrooms, fluency of terminology, and gender identity data.

#### Analysis

- A pre/post survey of knowledge and attitudes about affirming care will be administered to staff of targeted community health centers.
- Survey results will be analyzed to identify the extent to which they address core elements of affirming care and barriers to achieving them.

#### Anticipated Product

- Research findings on the provision of affirming care will be disseminated broadly to the academic medicine community through the publication of at least one article in a peer reviewed journal.

**PROJECT GOAL 3: To develop, translate, and broadly disseminate research findings as curriculum products on providing affirming care for LGBTQ persons to academic, clinical, and advocacy organizations through traditional and non-traditional venues.**

#### Methodology

- Research findings will be translated into medical education curriculum recommendations on addressing the primary health care needs for affirming care among LGBTQ patients.
- Evidence-based affirming care curriculum will be developed in conjunction with national partners.
- Curricular units will be mapped to the *Medbiquitous Curriculum Inventory Working Group Standardized Instructional and Assessment Methods and Resource Types*.

#### Anticipated Products

- Data driven recommendations will be disseminated through a minimum of one scholarly presentation on the extent to which health care providers at community health centers are providing affirming care to LGBTQ patients and barriers to practice.
- A minimum of one article will be published in a peer-reviewed journal on curriculum recommendations for teaching medical students to provide affirming care for LGBTQ patients.
- Social media will be used to broadly disseminate research findings and curriculum products in providing affirming care for LGBTQ patients
- A policy brief with recommendations about the role of medical schools in training students and residents about affirming care will be developed and disseminated.
- Technical assistance will be provided to other medical schools and residency programs on how to integrate affirming care for LGBTQ patients into their curriculum.

#### Policy Relevance

Affirming care has been identified as an emerging area which has not received much attention in medical education or residency training resulting in a workforce that is ill-prepared to provide culturally appropriate care for the LGBTQ population. The lack of provision of culturally

competent care for persons who are LGBTQ contributes to the continuing disparities in health access and outcomes for this population.

### Limitations

- Medical schools and residency programs may be resistant to additional curriculum demands
- Medical schools and residency programs may not prioritize teaching students and residents about affirming care for LGBTQ patients.

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