

Provider Concerns, Youth Reactions: Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Health Care

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Opportunity Conference

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Overview

- Brief background
- Qualitative study
 - Health care providers
 - TGNC youth
- Facilitated discussion

TGNC Youth

- Stigma in health care settings
- Barriers to health care
 - Providers' lack of education and specialized training
 - Fear of being misunderstood or treated insensitively
- Health disparities
 - Decreased service utilization
 - Poorer health outcomes

Purpose & Study Design

- to describe providers' patient encounters and desire for training related to providing health services to TGNC youth
- to describe youths' reactions to providers' responses and their own needs in health care settings

Methods

Semi-structured interviews

- Interviews (N = 14) with physicians and nurses who work with adolescents in MN
- Interviews (N = 12) with TGNC-identified adolescents living in MN

Qualitative Analysis

- Thematic analysis used to characterize participants' responses
- Organized into themes and subthemes

Demographics for Participants

Health Care Providers (N = 14)	n
Physicians	6
Nurses	8
Years in Practice	
< 5 years	2
5-9 years	4
10+ years	8
Female Assigned at Birth	12
Hispanic (yes)	1
Race (White)	13

Methods

Interview questions

- In your professional training, what, if anything, did you learn about gender identity and expression or how to talk about it with your adolescent patients and/or their parents?
- How comfortable are you having conversations about gender identity and expression with your patients?
- How do you talk with your patients about gender identity and expression? Can you give an example?

Theme 1: Gender diversity training experiences of health care providers

No Training: *“In my schooling, none...I’ve got a lot of experience, but none of it came from formalized academic setting; it was all on my own personal initiative.”* (Nurse, academic medical center/hospital, 5-9 years in practice, cisgender female, white NH)

Some Training: *“There wasn’t any discussion on that really at all... Yeah, I don’t think there was even a PowerPoint slide. I think it was a one-page handout and it was the instructor in class; there was no guest speaker, so there was no representation from anybody in the LGBTQ community even to even say anything about it... It was more like, “Hey, this exists, but we’ll just wait until you see it in your own practice to actually learn about it.”* (Nurse, Family Planning Clinic, 5-9 years in practice, cisgender female, white NH)

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Theme 2: Discomfort with gender-related topics

“Again, it comes down to just the pronouns...where I want to make sure that I use the right pronouns and the right verbiage... OK, when I’m looking at it in a training, I can keep it straight, and then suddenly in a room, waiting for them to refer to it; did I say that right?” (Nurse, Family Planning Clinic, 5-9 years in practice, cisgender female, white NH)

“I think we’re still developing the language in gender expression, so, even though I’ve been doing it for a long time, I find, sometimes, that community words have changed, or things that we used to use to describe something changed. So it’s probably not quite as comfortable as others...” (Physician, hospital, 10+ years in practice, cisgender male, white NH)

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**Theme 3:
Reasons for
not asking
about gender**

Fear of offending or losing trust

“For me, it’s the judgment part. I don’t want to pass judgment on anybody. And again, it’s the uncomfortable; I don’t know what to say or how to say it without other people taking offense to it. I don’t want to offend anyone. I’m here to treat everybody as equals, and I don’t want them to feel uncomfortable coming to my clinic.” (Nurse, community clinic, <5 years in practice, cisgender female, white NH)

Info available on forms

“I don’t [ask about gender]. I have a demographic sheet that they fill out, and it does give an option to put born gender, and then they can place on there their preferred pronouns, so I don’t diverge into too much personally with them about it.” (Nurse, family planning clinic, 10+ years in practice, cisgender female, white NH)

Theme 4: Talking with patients about gender

Of those providers who do talk about gender:

“I talk about it being a spectrum, and that not everybody fits at one end of the spectrum, and that you could be anywhere in-between, and that’s normal.”

(Physician, hospital, 10+ years in practice, cisgender male, white NH)

“Yea, [asking about gender] is for everyone because they might be identifying themselves as cisgender right now, but they might have been...sometimes you have someone who is at that age of wondering...”

(Physician, community clinic/hospital, 10+ years in practice, cisgender female, Hispanic)

Interviews with TGNC youth

Purpose & Study Design

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- to describe youths' reactions to providers' responses and their own needs in health care settings

Demographics for Participants

Youth Participants (N = 12)	
Age, years	16.2 (14-17)
Gender Identity	
Trans masculine	2
Trans feminine	1
Non-binary, genderqueer, etc	9
Female assigned at birth	11
LGBQ+ Sexual Orientation	11
Hispanic (yes)	0
Race (White)	9

Methods

Interview questions

- Health care providers told us that they're uncomfortable asking about gender because they're afraid of offending people or sounding judgmental. What do you think about that?
- If you had the opportunity to tell health care providers something about trans or genderqueer teenagers, what would it be?

Theme 1: Reasons to ask about gender

Shows caring, respect:

“People always are afraid that they'll offend people. And that's just, that's such a silly thing to worry about, because people are more concerned about whether you care enough to ask them than whether you'll offend them. ... And so even if they say something that isn't right ... it's still good for them to ask, because I can always just correct them, and, if they really care, then they'll listen to me.”

(non-binary, pansexual, Asian/white, 14)

Patient safety, comfort:

“There's a lot bigger safety risk for a trans person coming out to you than there is for you to ask them.”

(transman/transmasculine, queer, white, 17)

Theme 2: How to ask

Simple, respectful language:

“Or like simply saying, ‘what’s your name and pronouns?’ If they want to know a little bit more because they want to be more sensitive it could be like, ‘How do you identify yourself?’ Like in my school on the first day of school we ask for name, pronouns and how you identify. If we can do it in a high school I think we can do it at the doctor’s office.”

(nonbinary/genderfluid, pansexual, white, 16)

Forms:

“So, for some things it would be better to ask on a form, like pronouns and preferred name, because if the doctor looks at that form right when they get it, then they know they don't have to ask that question.”

(girl, queer, white, 15)

Theme 3: Whom to ask

Routine question, ask everyone:

“That’s what I would tell those specific healthcare providers. If you find it uncomfortable, ask every single person you see, what are your pronouns. ... Be like, ‘I’m Dr. Such-and-such and I use he/him pronouns. What are your pronouns?’ That’s a way to make it friendly for everyone across the board, especially people who are afraid to come out to their healthcare professionals.”

(transman/transmasculine, queer, white, 17)

“I think it could be asked to any patient, because you never know who identifies...”

(trans-male, pansexual, white, 17)

Methods

Interview questions

- Health care providers told us that they're uncomfortable asking about gender because they're afraid of offending people or sounding judgmental. What do you think about this?
- If you had the opportunity to tell health care providers something about trans or genderqueer teenagers, what would it be?

Theme 1: TGNC people are diverse

“I think if I had something really important to tell them, it would probably be that nobody has the same experiences with being transgender.”

(girl, queer, white, 15)

“People, like, want different things, and [providers] shouldn't base their idea of what someone may want or may need based off of the general thought of what that includes. For example saying, like, 'You identify as a trans man, so therefore you must want top surgery; you must want bottom surgery; you must want to use he/him pronouns.' You don't want to assume these things, and you want to just talk with them instead.”

(non-binary, pansexual, Asian/white, 14)

Theme 2: TGNC people are PEOPLE

“It’s not like our gender is the only thing we ever need to talk about. We have like normal human issues, too. Like we break our bones; we get infections.”

(nonbinary/genderfluid, pansexual, white, 16)

“I think as a healthcare provider ... your job is to provide everybody with the same care. I keep returning to that as a point, but that’s kind of what it all returns to. We’re not really different or special. We’re just people with people stuff.”

(transman/transmasculine, queer, white, 17)

Theme 3: Learn names/pronouns and use them

“I think, for one, really trying to, in some way, find out people's preferred name or preferred pronouns.”

(trans-male, pansexual, white, 17)

“if someone doesn't want to be called ‘she’ and they wanted to be called ‘he,’ I think that's really important for everyone who's in the LGBT community. If they want to go by he, them, they, I think it's important for the doctor to call them by that, instead of what they were born as, because they would be disrespectful to them and like it'll hurt their feelings and stuff.”

(female/boy, “stud” orientation, American Indian/Black/white, 17)

Summary: Health care providers

1. Training experience
 - None
 - Some
2. Discomfort with gender-related topics
3. Reasons for not asking about gender
 - Info available on forms
 - Fear of offending or losing trust
4. Talking with patients about gender

Summary: TGNC youth

1. Reasons to ask about gender
 - Shows caring, respect
 - Patient safety, comfort
 2. How to ask
 - Simple, respectful language
 - Forms
 3. Whom to ask
 - Routine questions, ask everyone
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1. TGNC people are diverse
2. TGNC people are PEOPLE
3. Learn names/pronouns and use them

Discussion

- Multiple opportunities for enhancing medical and nursing education
 - Addressing discomfort while developing skills to discuss gender issues
- Many concrete suggestions from youth themselves
- Such education may result in increased care use and better quality of care for all youth

Questions?

Discussion

Discussion

- Introductions
- Reflection on presentation and quotes
- What kind of training is needed?
 - What have you seen that worked well?
 - Where/when/who could provide?
- What actions can clinics/organizations take to be welcoming of all genders?
- What can we apply from non-medical contexts (e.g., schools, youth orgs)?

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