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Imaging the Transgender Patient

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Introduction

Within the health care system, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons face many obstacles that lead to health disparities. These disparities include social stigma, lack of provider knowledge and training, lack of sufficient health insurance coverage, and layout of physician practice. As noted by the Joint Commission, federal law prohibits the discrimination of individuals based on race, color, national origin, age, disability, and sex within the health care system.¹ It is essential for all health care providers to be educated on the best practices in regard to caring for the LGBT patient.

The focus of this exhibit is to define and explain terminology important in the care of the LGBT patient, identify health disparities faced by the LGBT patient, describe the health care needs of the LGBT patient and to list the best practices in regard to creating a welcoming and safe environment for the LGBT patient.

Terminology

Understanding the terminology used within the LGBT community is essential to providing quality care. See Table 1 for a brief glossary of important transgender terminology.²

Discrimination & Health Concerns

According to a transgender (trans) survey performed by Grant et al in 2010, 19% of trans patients refused health care and 28% faced discriminatory treatment in the doctor's office.³ A large percentage of trans patients felt their physicians lacked the cultural competence to care for them and even felt they had to educate their provider about their health needs. Health care professionals need to be knowledgeable about the specific health care needs of the trans patient.

The individual, interpersonal, and institutional stigma encountered by the trans individual plays a role in some of the trans specific health concerns. These health concerns range from alcohol, tobacco, and drug use to unsafe sex putting these individuals at risk for sexually transmitted infections (STI) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) to mental health issues such as suicidal ideation.⁴ Another concern for these persons is the risk of violence from both intimate partners and from strangers. Many trans individuals that fall victims of violence fail to report the incident as they fear others' perceptions of them.⁵ Another health concern for trans patients is ensuring that they get screened for cancer specific to their natal organs. Transmen are still at risk of developing cervical cancer and transwomen are still at risk for prostate cancer. Sensitivity to these unique situations is important.⁶

Table #1: Glossary of Transgender Terminology²

Term	Definition
Sex	Designation of a person as a male or female at birth
Gender Identity	One's personal view of one's own gender.
Gender Expression	How one communicates their gender; may include one's behavior, dress, mannerisms, & social interactions.
Gender nonconformity	Differing a person's gender identity from the cultural norms prescribed for people of that particular sex.
Transgender	Umbrella term that encompasses anyone whose identity falls outside of the binary, stereotypical gender dichotomy.
Gender dysphoria	Distress caused by discrepancy between a person's gender identity & natal sex.
Transsexual	A person whose gender identity & natal sex differ.
FtM or Transman	Female-to-Male, born with female sex organs but identifies as male
MtF or Transwoman	Male-to-Female, born with male sex organs but identifies as female

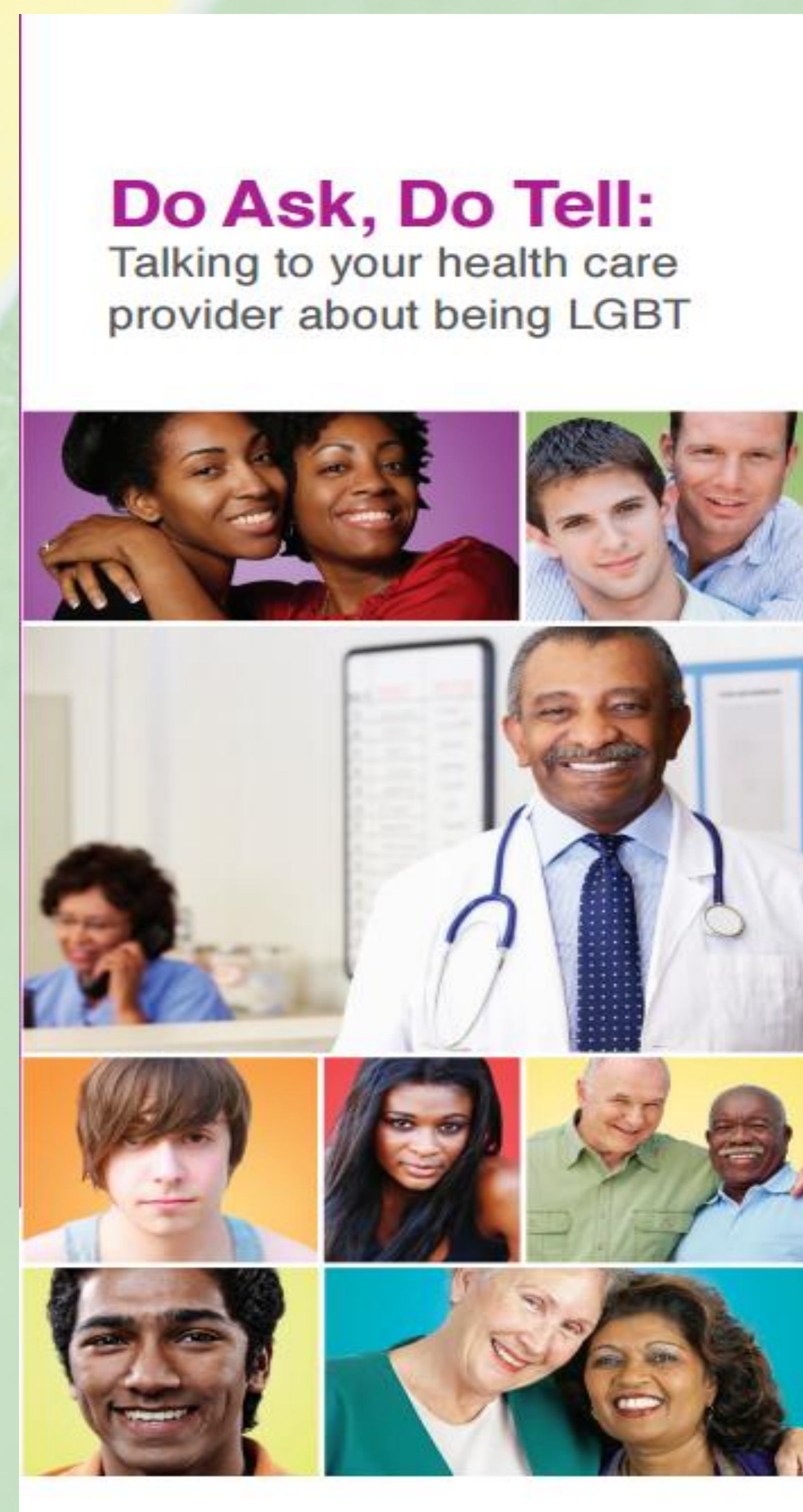


Figure 1. Example of brochures to have available in the department to illustrate welcome.⁷

Table #2: Screening Recommendations for Transgender Women & Men²

Group	Recommendation(s)
Transgender women ≥ 50 years old with past or current hormone use	Annual mammography if the patient has additional risk factors such as estrogen & progestin use for > 5 years, body mass index >35 & family history; clinical breast examination recommended only for educational benefit, not for formal cancer screening.
Transgender women with no hormone use	Routine screening is not indicated unless the patient has other known risk factors.
Transgender men who underwent reduction mammo-plasty or no chest surgery	Breast examination & screening mammography are recommended as for natal women.
Transgender men after bilateral mastectomy	Yearly chest wall & axillary examinations.
Preoperative transgender men	Mammography only if the patient meets usual natal female requirements.

Creating a Safe & Welcoming Environment

For the trans patient to seek out medical care, he/she/other should feel welcome in the health care environment. The health care institution should have a non-discrimination policy, all health care professionals from front desk personnel to clinicians should have LGBT cultural competency training, and the office or reception area should have stickers or pamphlets (see figure 1) on display to show that the institution LGBT friendly. Gender neutral restrooms and changing rooms should also be available. When gathering patient information, the intake forms should include a full range of sexual, gender identity, and gender expression questions. In addition, the institution should place it's name on the list of LGBT friendly providers located on GLMA.org. GLMA is the world's largest association of LGBT healthcare professionals.⁸

Imaging Considerations

Although there is limited data in regard to imaging considerations for the LGBT patient, some screening recommendations are in place for various health concerns. For example, breast cancer screening guidelines have been recommended for both transgender women and men based on their family history, use of hormones and surgical status (see Table 2).²

Conclusion

There are many factors that can affect the health care experience for a trans individual. Some may be out of the health care provider or institution's control, but there are a number of factors that members of the health care team can control. To get started, all health care personnel should have LGBT cultural competency training and must provide a safe and welcoming environment for these patients. The ultimate goal for all health care workers is to provide exceptional patient care for all.

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