



A Position Statement on Gender Diversity

The American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses (ASPAN) advocates for an environment in which perianesthesia registered nurses deliver equitable and inclusive care to each unique population undergoing anesthesia for surgery or invasive procedures. Foremost, perianesthesia registered nurses have the responsibility of recognizing the uniqueness of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) individuals.^a Individuals from these populations have unique and distinct identities, cultural and psychosocial values, and healthcare vulnerabilities and needs that must be acknowledged by perianesthesia registered nurses.

Background

Individuals from the LGBTQ community have distinct healthcare needs and face well-documented healthcare disparities. There are large numbers of LGBTQ people in the United States and around the world who struggle daily in the face of stigma and discrimination.¹ Many LGBTQ individuals avoid care for preventable and life-threatening conditions due to fear and experiences of discriminatory treatment. Transgender individuals face many barriers to receiving quality care.² LGBTQ patients are consequently deprived of healthcare privileges and rights stemming from refusals of care, delayed or substandard care, mistreatment, inequitable policies and practices, little or no inclusion in health outreach or education, and inappropriate restrictions or limits on visitation.³ As a result, patients either seek treatment that can be harmful, not regulated, or detrimental to their health, or avoid managing their health condition rather than be subjected to shame and embarrassment. This leads to poor quality care and outcomes.

Over 70% of transgender or gender non-conforming individuals report experiencing some type of discrimination in healthcare.⁴ Over 50% of transgender individuals believe they would be refused medical care because of their LGBTQ status.⁴ Healthcare professionals are currently challenged in addressing the physical, mental, and social concerns of LGBTQ patients. While academic institutions are beginning to incorporate education specific to the needs of this population, gaps remain. Lack of purposeful and focused discussions between clinicians and administration can contribute to inadequate policies in addressing LGBTQ care.

Position

The following professional practices are recommended to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of transgender or gender non-conforming individuals:

- Assessing health and economic disparities in the LGBTQ community and understanding the prevalence of anti-LGBTQ discrimination

^aThe body of evidence, including the terminology and the understanding around gender diversity, are evolving and ever changing. As a result, ASPAN recommends that members seek additional and current information from the following sites:

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, & Intersex Life at <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lgbtqi/resources/definitions>
- Definitions related to sexual orientation and gender diversity in APA documents at <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/sexuality-definitions.pdf>



- Creating a transgender-friendly office/center environment for patients and the healthcare team with available resources
- Complying with regulatory and authoritative agencies (e.g., The Joint Commission, National Academy of Medicine [formerly the Institute of Medicine], Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services) to prohibit discrimination based on factors including sexual orientation and gender identity or expression
- Complying with Department of Health and Human Services rules that require sexual orientation and gender identity data be collected in the electronic health record
- Offering gender-neutral facilities when possible
- Developing and administering periodic training on transgender identity and health within the facility or organization
- Encouraging and maintaining a safe workplace culture through enhanced communication skills
- Supporting an environment of accountability and cultural sensitivity
- Collecting feedback from LGBTQ patients and families and the surrounding LGBTQ community for process improvements

Expected Outcomes

ASPAN advocates the promotion of holistic, inclusive, and comprehensive care to all patients regardless of gender-related differences. Increasing awareness through education promotes understanding and encourages development of knowledge and skills that accommodates the needs of the LGBTQ population.

Approval of Statement

This statement was reviewed by the ASPAN Board of Directors on April 28, 2018, in Anaheim, California, and approved by a vote of the ASPAN Representative Assembly on April 29, 2018, in Anaheim, CA.

This position statement was updated and revised at the October 2019 meeting of the Standards and Guidelines Strategic Work Team in Dallas, Texas.

REFERENCES

1. National LGBT Health Education Center. Understanding the health needs of LGBT people. 2016. Accessed July 10, 2020. <https://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/LGBTHealthDisparitiesMar2016.pdf>
2. National LGBT Health Education Center. Affirmative care for transgender and gender non-conforming people: best practices for the front-line health care staff. 2016. Accessed July 10, 2020. <https://www.lgbtqiahealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Affirmative-Care-for-Transgender-and-Gender-Non-conforming-People-Best-Practices-for-Front-line-Health-Care-Staff.pdf>
3. The Joint Commission. Advancing effective communication, cultural competence, and patient- and family-centered care for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community: a field guide. 2011. Accessed July 10, 2020. https://www.jointcommission.org/assets/1/18/LGBTFieldGuide_WEB_LINKED_VER.pdf

4. Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Healthcare equality index 2019: promoting equitable and inclusive care for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer patients and their families. 2019. Accessed July 10, 2020. https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HEI-2019-FinalReport.pdf?_ga=2.20715896.1931744794.1566242159-1842163825.1566242159

ADDITIONAL READING

Biederman DJ, Hines D. Barriers to care for transgender people: a conversation with Dana Hines, PhD, MSN, RN. *Creat Nurs*. 2016;22(2):128-134. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1078-4535.22.2.128>

Center for American Progress. New HHS rules require sexual orientation and gender identity data collection in electronic health records program statement. October 2015. Accessed July 10, 2020. <https://www.americanprogress.org/press/statement/2015/10/07/122884/statement-new-hhs-rules-require-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-data-collection-in-electronic-health-records-program/>

National LGBT Health Education Center. Learning to address implicit bias towards LGBTQ patients: case scenarios. September 2018. Accessed July 10, 2020. https://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Implicit-Bias-Guide-2018_Final.pdf

National LGBT Health Education Center. Providing welcoming services and care for LGBT people. A learning guide for staff. January 2015. Accessed July 10, 2020. http://champsonline.org/assets/files/Events/DistanceDocuments/LGBT_LearningGuide.pdf

