



The issue:

HEALTH CARE

One in 2 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender patients have been discriminated against by their health care providers.



damn facts

Forty percent of physicians say they are uncomfortable treating gay, lesbian or bisexual patients.¹³

Almost 1 in 10 gay patients, and more than 1 in 4 transgender patients, have been denied needed medical care.¹⁴

Forty-four percent of gay men, and 45% of lesbian and bisexual women, are not out to their providers.¹⁵

Only about one-third of providers often or always took patients' sexual histories.¹⁶

Up to 30% of lesbians lack health insurance, vs. 15% of the general population.¹⁷

a project of



Little Health, and Even Less Care: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HEALTH CARE!

Every aspect of our country's health care system makes it difficult for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender patients, and their families, to receive quality care—often in situations where they most need it. Consider:

- Health care professionals may harbor prejudices that affect the quality of care they deliver to gay and transgender patients.
- Few health care providers are educated in the health issues for which gay and transgender people are most at risk.
- Lack of health insurance coverage limits access to care.
- Prejudices and a lack of cultural competency can interfere with gay and transgender patients' wishes regarding medical decision-making and hospital visitation and treatment.

HOW DISCRIMINATION RELATES TO HEALTH CARE!

For gay and transgender Americans, discrimination is an all-too-common theme when accessing our nation's health care system. Forty percent of physicians admit to sometimes or often being uncomfortable treating gay patients.¹ And a survey of nursing students found that 8% to 12% "despised" gay people while another 5% to 12% found them "disgusting."²

Fifty-six percent of gay and 70% of transgender patients have reported experiencing discrimination from their medical providers,³ such as health care providers refusing to touch them or using excessive precautions, using harsh or abusive language, blaming them for their health status, or being physically rough or abusive.

Almost 1 in 10 gay patients—and more than 1 in 4 transgender patients—say they have been denied needed medical care.⁴

Because of fears of being stigmatized or discriminated against, as many as 44% of gay men, and 45% of lesbian and bisexual women, are not out to their providers.⁵

HOW PROVIDERS FAIL ON HEALTH!

Yet discussing their sexual histories with their providers is one of the most important things gay and transgender people can do for their health. Like other minorities, gay and transgender people are at risk for specific health issues, including certain types of cancer, depression and anxiety, substance abuse, cardiovascular health, HIV/AIDS and more.⁶

While organizations such as the Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Medical Association are working to change this,⁷ most medical schools and other health professional programs still offer little by way of formal training in gay and transgender health issues.



www.hrc.org

The Human Rights Campaign is the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights organization.



www.glma.org

The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association is the world's largest and oldest association of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender health care professionals.

Meanwhile, many health care institutions operate on the assumption that their patients are straight.

The majority of health care providers don't bother taking patients' sexual histories—even though this knowledge would help in screening and preventive care for specific risk factors. According to one survey, only 35% of providers often or always took down this information.⁸

WHY ACCESS TO CARE IS DIFFICULT!

But access to any care at all can be difficult. Many employers don't extend health insurance coverage to domestic partners of their employees—up to 30% of lesbians lack health insurance, vs. only 15% of the general population.⁹

Even when insurance is extended to domestic partners, inequities in federal tax law require that they pay taxes on the insurance.¹⁰ Married straight couples, incidentally, are exempt.

Too, health insurance companies don't always cover the medical treatments that gay and transgender people may be more likely to access, such as infertility treatments for lesbian patients and gender reassignment procedures for transgender patients.¹¹

HOW MEDICAL DECISION-MAKING IS AFFECTED!

Just as critical, however, is how medical decision-making can be affected when a patient is gay. While advance health care directives are legally valid, many gay and transgender patients who appointed their partner to make treatment decisions on their behalf have related experiences in which health care staff have failed to comply.¹²

Under new federal rules, gay and transgender patients do have the right to designate visitors of their choosing. Hospitals must still ensure, however, that clear policies and sufficient staff training are in place to prevent the prejudices of health care staff from keeping families apart.

MOST IMPORTANT THINGS!

We need to give a damn, because our health is one of the most important things we have.

Our health care system should consider the needs of all patients. And no one should be denied the opportunity to get the best care possible. It's time for things to change.

WE GIVE A DAMN. DO YOU?

I GIVE A DAMN ABOUT HEALTH CARE! Now What?

- **JOIN THE GIVE A DAMN CAMPAIGN:** The Give A Damn Campaign is for everybody who cares about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality, especially all you straight people out there!
 - Register now at www.wegiveadamn.org
- **GET INFORMED:** Learn more about the issues.
 - Watch a Damn Video or read people's Personal Stories
 - Check out our Damn Blog, which is updated daily
- **GET INVOLVED:** Spread the word about equality to family and friends!
 - Share a Damn Video or tell us your Personal Story
 - Forward this PDF
- **VISIT OUR NON-PROFIT PARTNERS' WEBSITES**
 - Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA): www.glma.org
 - Human Rights Campaign: www.hrc.org

www.wegiveadamn.org

1 GLMA and Columbia University Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health. "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health: Findings and Concerns (Conference Edition, work in progress)," January 2010. www.glma.org

2 GLMA. "Guidelines for Care of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Patients." www.glma.org

3-4 Lambda Legal. "When Health Care Isn't Caring: Lambda Legal's Survey on Discrimination Against LGBT People and People Living with HIV," February 3, 2010.

5 See 2.

6 GLMA. "Ten Things Gay Men/Lesbians/Transgender Persons Should Discuss with Their Health Care Providers." www.glma.org

7 GLMA. "Presentation to the Institute of Medicine's Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health Issues and Research Gaps and Opportunities," February 1, 2010. www.glma.org

8-9 See 2.

10 Human Rights Campaign. "Tax Equity for Health Plan Beneficiaries Act," September 19, 2009. www.hrc.org

11 Human Rights Campaign. "Health Reform for LGBT Americans," 2010. www.hrc.org

12 Human Rights Campaign. "Healthcare Equality Index," 2010. www.hrc.org

13 See 1.

14 See 3-4.

15-16 See 2.

17 See 2.