

# Did You Know...?

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people have unique health disparities and worse health outcomes than their heterosexual counterparts, which has clinical relevance in the delivery of diabetes care and education.\*



## Diabetes and the LGBT community

### LGBT people experience barriers to diabetes education and access and/or a complete diabetes plan...

- Critical information is often missed in the patient's health assessment, in part because of institutional-level barriers that assume heterosexuality
- Providers are often unaware of, or not trained on, the health disparities in the LGBT population
- LGBT individuals experience hostility and discrimination in care
- Concerns about homophobia and transphobia keep LGBT individuals from using healthcare services
- Topics related to LGBT health are under-researched; data on rates of diabetes within the LGBT community are lacking
- Some of the unique LGBT risk factors affecting diabetes:
  - √ Highest smoking prevalence rates which increases insulin resistance
  - √ Highest polycystic ovarian syndrome among lesbians, a risk factor for type 2 diabetes
  - √ Overweight and obesity rates are higher among lesbians and transgender women on hormones
  - √ Men receiving HIV treatment have 4x the diabetes rates of HIV-negative men
  - √ Up to 39% of transgender people face harassment when seeking routine health care

### How to provide culturally sensitive, competent care...

- Include sexual orientation and gender identification questions on intake forms
- Post nondiscrimination policies including gender or medical brochures that address the health needs of diverse groups
- Include patient's significant other regardless of sexual preference
- Accept responsibility for personal beliefs and become sensitive to the norms that shape patients' lives including showing respect for family structures and roles within LGBT culture
- Become familiar with unique risk factors affecting diabetes and include discussions of these factors when administering care
- Familiarize staff with two comprehensive publications dealing with this community: *The Fenway Guide to LGBT Health* and *The Handbook of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Public Health: A Practitioner's Guide to Service*

For more information please see:

Affirmations Lesbian/Gay Community Center at [www.goaffirmations.org](http://www.goaffirmations.org)

Gay and Lesbian Medical Association at <http://www.glma.org/>

\*Reference: Garner, Theresa L. Providing Culturally Sensitive Diabetes Care and Education for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Community. *Diabetes Spectrum*, Volume 23, Number 3, 2010; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/>