Lesbian Gay & Bisexual Patients: The Issues for General Practice

QUALITY IN PRACTICE COMMITTEE

A Quick Reference Guide for Primary Care Staff

KEY POINTS: Good Practice with Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Patients
1. Stay informed on LGB health issues
2. Don’t assume patients are heterosexual
3. Acknowledge when patients disclose they are lesbian, gay or bisexual
4. Take a gay-affirmative approach and challenge bias
5. Demonstrate that your practice is LGB-friendly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say:</th>
<th>Instead of:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a partner?</td>
<td>Are you married?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you in a relationship?</td>
<td>Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is your partner’s name?</td>
<td>What is your husband/wife’s name?</td>
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EXAMPLES OF INCLUSIVE QUESTIONS

If you think a patient may be lesbian, gay or bisexual and would like to encourage them to disclose:

- Reassure the patient that all personal information disclosed is confidential and that you provide a non-judgemental service
- Explain the importance for you as their general practitioner in understanding issues that are relevant to their health so that you can identify the appropriate treatment or supports that they may need
- Enquire about relationships both current and past
- Try asking indirectly. For example, “In my practice I see a lot of straight and gay people struggling with issues like relationships. Might this be relevant to you?”
- Try asking directly. For example, “Is your partner a man or a woman?” “Are you attracted to men, women or both?” “Have your past relationships been with men, women or both?”
- If someone is hinting at an LGB issue, you could try asking something like, “It sounds as if you are questioning your feelings/identity/orientation… has that been on your mind”. 

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In addition to routine assessment, where appropriate, screen LGB patients for:

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>General Health</th>
<th>Sexual Health</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Self-Harm</td>
<td>- Smoking</td>
<td>- STIs</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Suicidal Behaviour</td>
<td>- Alcohol Consumption</td>
<td>- HIV</td>
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<td>- Depression</td>
<td>- Recreational Drug Use</td>
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- Patients can benefit from referral to LGB organisations or helplines for support, advice and information (See Appendix 3)
- Where appropriate, consider referral to mental health services and other support services, such as counselling and psychotherapy
- Also consider referral to a specialist sexual health service for STI screening

Organisations & Services

National LGBT Helpline
1890 929 539
www.lgbt.ie

Gay & Lesbian Equality Network
01-6728650
www.glen.ie

Transgender Equality Network Ireland
01-6334687
www.teni.ie

Dundalk Outcomers
042-9329816
www.outcomers.org

The Other Place (Cork)
021-4278470
www.theotherplacecork.com

LOOK (Parent Support)
087-2537699
www.lovingouroutkids.org

LGBT Mental Health Website
www.lgbtmamentalhealth.ie

BeLonG To LGBT Youth Service
01-6706223
info@belongto.org

LINC (Lesbian Service)
021-4808600
www.linc.ie

Gay Men’s Health Service
01-8734952
gmhpoutreach@eircom.net

Outhouse Community Centre Dublin
01-8734932
www.outhouse.ie

Greenbow Deaf LGBT Group
086 367 1375
www.greenbowdeaf.com

For more information on what general practitioners can do to support LGB patients see the accompanying resource Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Patients: The Issues for General Practice, available at icgp.ie or glen.ie