

Guidelines for primary health care providers to enhance the care of gay and bisexual men

CHAPS

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Knowledge and understanding

- Be aware of the impact of sexuality based discrimination on health and wellbeing.
- Be aware of the particular health and health care issues specifically related to gay and bisexual men.
- Be knowledgeable about gay and bisexual sensitive referral networks.
- Be knowledgeable about gay and bisexual specific support and community groups.
- Some people do not define themselves through a sexual orientation label such as 'gay' but they may have sex with people of the same sex or with more than one sex.

Communication

- Use gender neutral terms such as 'partner' and other inclusive terms to facilitate disclosure.
- When taking a sexual history, be aware that people can express their sexuality in a range of ways.
- Encourage disclosure of sexual identity, orientation and behaviour, especially when they are relevant to the health issues presented.
- Assure the patient of confidentiality.
- Using open ended questions will help to facilitate discussion about sex and sexuality.
- When discussing sexual practices and sex avoid language that may presume heterosexuality.
- Ask the patient to clarify any terms or behaviours with which you are unfamiliar to ensure miscommunication does not occur.

Attitudes

- Be non-judgemental.
- Avoid the assumption of heterosexuality.
- Avoid common assumptions and stereotypes about gay and bisexual men.
- Be willing and open to facilitate disclosure of sexuality.

- Be willing and open to involve gay and bisexual partners in decision making.
- Be aware that there are additional barriers that increase stigmatisation including ethnic minority status, disability, age or economic status. Do not make assumptions about literacy, language capabilities or comfort with direct communication.

Clinical environment

- Train all staff, including reception in gay and bisexual sensitivity issues.
- Develop, implement and display an equality statement which explicitly mentions sexual orientation.
- Design registration forms to be inclusive of gay and bisexual patients by using inclusive language.
- Display and make available posters and brochures relating to gay and bisexual patients.
- If your clinic develops brochures or educational materials, include information relevant to gay and bisexual men.
- Acknowledge and promote relevant days of observance and celebration such as GLBT pride, World AIDS day etc.

Confidentiality

- Develop, display and distribute a written confidentiality statement which encourages gay and bisexual men to disclose information pertinent to their health. Key elements of such a statement could include:
 - The information covered by confidentiality
 - Who has access to the medical records
 - How test results will remain confidential
 - Policy on sharing information with others
 - Instances where maintaining confidentiality is not possible.

The HIV and sexual health charity for life

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