Queer Student Experiences with Reproductive Health Care at UNC Campus Health

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Introduction

Queer (i.e., non-heterosexual) individuals face several barriers to accessible and high-quality health care. Barriers include:
- Lack of resources for LGBTQ health
- Lack of LGBTQ health knowledge among providers
- Patients’ fear of disclosure of gender or sexual identity due to potential discrimination
- Lack of insurance

One area in which queer people face barriers is reproductive health care, which this study defines as gynecological services, birth control and contraception services, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing, prevention, and treatment, and pregnancy care. Disparities include that queer people are:
- Less likely to receive contraceptive counseling or use contraceptives
- More likely to experience STIs and unintended pregnancy
- More likely to delay Pap smears, cervical cancer screenings, breast exams, and mammograms

Several factors contribute to positive reproductive health care experiences for queer people, including non-judgmental providers, gender-neutral language used by providers and on forms, and health care settings with signs of LGBTQ equality.

This study explores queer undergraduate students’ experiences seeking and receiving reproductive health care at UNC Campus Health. Specifically, three questions are addressed:
1. Are queer students comfortable approaching and interacting with providers?
2. Do queer students believe that providers provide LGBTQ competent care?
3. What images and language contribute to a welcoming environment for queer students?

Results

Responses in sections 1 and 2 were analyzed quantitatively
Responses in sections 3-6 were coded and analyzed thematically

Findings:
- Most participants agreed that reproductive health care providers at UNC Campus Health are approachable and LGBTQ competent
- Participants were neutral to the statement “My provider asks about my sexual orientation.” Sexual orientation disclosure is associated with positive health outcomes, so this finding may indicate a need for provider behavior change

Findings:
- 20-40% of participants reported that signs of LGBTQ equality and gender-neutral language cause them to feel more trust toward the setting, feel it is safer to disclose sexual orientation, and view the setting as inclusive.
- However, 14% of participants have never heard gender-neutral language at UNC Campus Health

Discussion

Findings can be applied to reproductive health care at UNC Campus Health and other college health centers to provide more inclusive, competent care. This care is integral to addressing LGBTQ health disparities and providing quality health care without barriers.

Methods

Undergraduates who identify as queer or non-heterosexual were recruited to complete an anonymous online survey
- 47 participants submitted responses

Survey sections:
1. Likert scale to measure whether participants perceive reproductive health care providers as approachable
2. Likert scale to measure whether participants perceive reproductive health care providers as LGBTQ competent
3. Questions about effects of signs about LGBTQ equality
4. Questions about effects of gender-neutral language
5. Open ended question 1: factors that would make participants more comfortable seeking and/or receiving reproductive health care
6. Open ended question 2: experiences with disclosure of sexual orientation to reproductive health care providers

Endnotes

References


