

LGBT Population Health Clerkship - Initiating the Creation of an LGBT+ Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) within the UMASS Memorial Healthcare System



Kirsten J Hartwick, MS2, Student Co-Leader; Michael Gaffney, MS2; Stephanie Bond, MS2; Kerry Lynch, MS2; Ryan PA Flynn, BS, RN; Kenneth Peterson, PhD, FNP-BC, Faculty Adviser

Introduction

During our clerkship, we worked to initiate the creation of an LGBT+ Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC). Each member of this community faces unique challenges, and the goal of this PFAC is to get input from a diverse group of patients in order to improve the quality of care and patient experience for all patients who identify as LGBT+, which may include those who are:

- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual
- Transgender, agender, and genderqueer
- Intersex and patients with disorders of sexual development
- Family, friends, or allies of any of the above

Patients who identify as LGBT+ often experience discomfort and discrimination from the healthcare community. While there are many organizations working toward improving the health of this community in Worcester, we learned that many patients are going to Boston to get their care at more LGBT-centered institutions. We believe that UMass should be able to provide quality, comprehensive, and compassionate care to this community, and the goal of the LGBT+ PFAC is to gather feedback and suggestions on how we can strive to reach this goal.

Population of Focus

According to the Healthy People 2020 Database, the LGBT population is at increased risk for certain negative health outcomes:

- "LGBT youth are 2 to 3 times more likely to attempt suicide
- LGBT youth are more likely to be homeless
- Lesbians are less likely to get preventive services for cancer
- Gay men are at higher risk of HIV and other STDs, especially among communities of color
- Lesbians and bisexual females are more likely to be overweight or obese
- Transgender individuals have a high prevalence of HIV/STDs, victimization, mental health issues, and suicide and are less likely to have health insurance than heterosexual or LGB individuals
- Elderly LGBT individuals face additional barriers to health because of isolation and a lack of social services and culturally competent providers
- LGBT populations have the highest rates of tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use"¹

Project Summary

We aimed to establish the groundwork necessary for the development of a Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC). From experiences speaking with members of the LGBT+ community and the Patient Experience sector of UMass Memorial Medical Center, it was determined that inequalities in LGBT+ care could be addressed by such a group directed at incorporating and applying patient concerns to current UMMMC policies. A PFAC functions to bring together members of a specific community who have also been patients or family members of patients in the health care system, to discuss inequalities in the provision of health care through personal experiences, and to identify opportunities for change. Many other PFACs exist in the UMMMC system, including an adult-specific PFAC, one for psychiatric services, and one directed at the care of pediatric patients; but this would be the first to specifically improve the care of LGBT+ individuals. During this Population Health Clerkship, it was therefore our mission to take the first steps in the formation of this important tool for patient advocacy.

Goals

- Explore the value of LGBT+ health public policy
- Reach out to and learn more about similar initiatives within the community
- Build the groundwork for an LGBT-centered Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC)
- Incorporate existing UMass Medical resources and Worcester-wide community members into the creation of the LGBT+ PFAC

Progress

- Developed a mission statement and purpose for the LGBT+ PFAC
- Developed recruitment materials for UMMS faculty, patient, and family member PFAC involvement
- Wrote a charter for the recruitment, mission, and action of a future LGBT+ PFAC
- Contacted Patient Experience to learn about the development and maintenance of other UMMS PFACs
- Reached out to potential PFAC leadership to begin formation
- Explored Worcester area LGBT+ groups and resources to incorporate their existence into the success of the PFAC

Outcomes

- The development of a PFAC requires involvement from members of the health care system, patients, their family members, and community leaders; all of whom have been contacted
- The groundwork is laid for the success of a LGBT+ PFAC once long-term leadership has been established

Next Steps

- Distribute recruiting materials to LGBT-friendly providers and Worcester area organizations
 - Flyers directed towards patients and families
 - Provider-directed emails for recruiting health care providers and their relevant patients
- Establish a leadership organization for the PFAC
- Begin the process of setting a date and space for the first PFAC meeting

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- LGBT Asylum Task Force
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- Safe Homes
- Worcester LGBT Elder Network (WLEN)

References

¹US Department of Health and Human Services, et al. "Healthy people 2020." (2010).