



# Strategies for better supporting Trans patients

TRANS DAY OF VISIBILITY 2022

# Avoid 'Us and Them' Thinking

- ❖ Transgender people are far more like cisgender people than unlike them
- ❖ Get to know transgender people as people.
- ❖ You can show respect by being relaxed and courteous.
- ❖ Avoid negative facial reactions and speak to transgender patients as you would any other patient.

## **Transgender**

An adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity is incongruent with (or does not “match”) the biological sex they were assigned at birth. “Transgender” serves an umbrella term to refer to the full range and diversity of identities within transgender communities.

## **Cisgender**

(Pronounced /sis-gender/):

An adjective to describe a person whose gender identity is congruent with (or “matches”) the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

(Some people abbreviate this as “cis”)

# Pronouns & use of appropriate language

- ❖ The practice of sharing pronouns is simply that; it should not be used as a way to determine someone's gender identity or establish your own beliefs about their body.
- ❖ Share your pronouns - "she/her/hers", "he/him/his", "they/them/their", or any combination that suits you
- ❖ Listen to your patient describe their sexual orientation and gender identity in their own words. Always use the words they use to describe themselves, even if they're not the words you might have assumed they'd use.
- ❖ Do not define a person's own experience of their body, relationships, or world for them

**Pronouns:**  
Are used to describe either individuals or groups of people, rather than using their name or names.

# Focus on the client's specific needs, rather than on their gender identity

- ❖ Transgender people need routine and preventative care in a safe and welcoming environment, just like everyone does.
- ❖ Remember to keep the focus on care rather than indulging in questions out of curiosity.
- ❖ In some health care situations, information about biological sex and/or hormone levels is important for assessing risk or drug interactions. But in many health care situations, gender identity is irrelevant. Asking questions about a person's transgender status, if the motivation for the question is only your own curiosity and is unrelated to care, is inappropriate and can quickly create a discriminatory environment.

**Transgender educator  
Rebecca Kling:**  
“I often joke that I don't go to the trans-dentist to get my trans-teeth cleaned. That's a healthcare situation where my trans identity is irrelevant.”

# Be a Trans-Ally

- ❖ Don't "out" people, either through gossiping or because you think others have a "right to know." Your patient must be free to make their own choice to be out (or not) in all situations and on their own terms.
- ❖ Allow people to process their gender identities and sexual orientations at their own pace. Pronouns and names may change a number of times and sexual orientation may shift along a continuum of identities.
- ❖ Coming out is not a one-time event. Allow for and welcome flexibility in identity, even if it is confusing to you.
- ❖ Interrupt language and behaviour that oppresses, alienates, stigmatizes or causes harm. Even and especially when you don't think a trans person is present.

It is not always safe for a person to be out with their gender identity; consider the risk of harm you would impose on your client if you were to out them

# As a clinician

- ❖ Understand the importance of intersectionality - Transgender people who are People of Colour, disabled, female-identified or a member of another marginalised group may struggle with discrimination on multiple levels.
- ❖ Be sensitive as to how intersectionality may affect the healthcare experiences of your clients.
- ❖ Become knowledgeable about transgender health care issues.
  - Get training, stay up to date on transgender issues, and know where to access resources.
- ❖ Involve transgender people in your practice. Hire transgender-identified health educators and advocates to educate you and your staff about inclusivity..
- ❖ Network with transgender-affirming clinicians and organisations in your field. They may be able to offer additional models and strategies for creating more transgender-affirming environments

## Intersectionality:

This concept describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, (dis)ability, class and other forms of discrimination “intersect” to create unique dynamics and effects

# As an organisation

- ❖ Provide gender neutral toilet options. Understand that this can be health and safety issue for trans, gender non-conforming and gender expansive people – the space you provide may be the only safe place to tend to their body that your client has had access to all day.
- ❖ Use passive advertising. Create a welcoming environment using posters and brochures that communicate that your organisation is a welcoming, informed space and that you do not tolerate transphobia, biphobia or homophobia.
- ❖ Offer sex and gender blanks on all forms, rather than male/female check boxes.
- ❖ Ask ALL clients about preferred names and pronouns, including those who “appear” cisgender. This questions assumptions based on appearances, and offers a teachable moment for cisgender patients to understand why these issues matter.
- ❖ Also respect that not all transgender patients may feel comfortable disclosing this information to you.

Toilet spaces can be a good place to display a selection of information posters; your patient may not feel comfortable seeming interested in this information in a public space.



This is not an exhaustive list