Filling the Gap: Creating a Student-Run LGBT+ Clinic to Address Health Disparities

Keeley D. Newsom

Medical student, Indiana University School of Medicine, Indianapolis, Indiana; email: newsomk@iu.edu; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1045-6995.

Sean A. Buehler

Medical student, Indiana University School of Medicine, Indianapolis, Indiana; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0657-3152.

Tari M. Kurman

Medical student, Indiana University School of Medicine, Indianapolis, Indiana; ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3835-208X.

First published online.

Acknowledgements: The authors thank Jessica Hille, JD, PhD, for her mentorship and guidance on these projects and this letter.

Funding/Support: None reported.

Other disclosures: None reported.

Ethical approval: Reported as not applicable
To the Editor: The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other sexual and gender minority (LGBT+) community experiences various health disparities, from increased risk of suicide to cancer.\textsuperscript{1} LGBT+ individuals, particularly those identifying as trans or nonbinary, often report suboptimal health care encounters. A lack of trust in health care providers and experiences of discrimination in health care settings often results in delayed care or unwillingness to seek care altogether.\textsuperscript{2} While these individuals navigate general barriers in the United States’ health care infrastructure, including costs and commutes, they must also navigate the complexities of finding a provider that respects and affirms their identity. Some medical institutions are attempting to address these disparities, but large gaps remain in medical education regarding LGBT+ health topics.

To assess the inclusion of LGBT+ health in the medical curriculum, we developed a survey for medical students in Indiana. When we found that medical trainees are unsatisfied with their exposure to LGBT+ health topics,\textsuperscript{3} we distributed a health needs assessment survey to determine how this lack of training affects those who live and receive care in our community. Inspired by these findings, we are developing a student-run outreach clinic that caters to the LGBT+ population and includes training for medical students on LGBT+ health topics and respectful, affirming care. We hope this initiative will both address gaps in medical training and the specific needs of our LGBT+ communities.

Our goals with an LGBT+-focused clinic are twofold: (1) increase medical student training in and exposure to LGBT+ health care so that they may provide more competent care in their future practice, and (2) provide a place for LGBT+ individuals in Indiana to seek health care while minimizing experiences of discrimination. We hope to demonstrate that student outreach clinics
targeting the LGBT+ community are an effective and fruitful investment, serving as a crossroads between clinical education and compassionate community health.

References

