My patient just told me he is gay. Now what?

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- I do not have any financial interest in, and/or affiliation with a commercial organization that may have a direct or indirect connection to the content of my presentation.

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Gay Men and Healthcare

Gay Men in Canada

- Gay men make up about 3% of the population
- About 30,000 gay men in Ottawa
- Gay men do tend to concentrate in larger urban settings
  - Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver

Providing care to Gay Men

Physicians feel poorly equipped to deliver care to Gay Men. Studies have shown physicians:

- rarely ask about the sexual orientation of their patients.
- feel unprepared to provide care to sexual minorities.
- desire better training in sexual minority health.

References

- Stott, D. The training needs of general practitioners in the exploration of sexual health matters and providing sexual healthcare to lesbian, gay and bisexual patients. Medical Teacher. 35: 752-759 (2013)
Providing care to Gay Men

Very little on sexual minority health is included in medical curricula. A recent survey revealed:
- The total time spent on all sexual minority health among medical schools in the United States and Canada was a mere 5 hours and that this time was dispersed over the 4 year curriculum.
- Notably, 3 of the 5 topics covered by at least 75% of schools and considered relevant were safer sex, sexually transmitted infections and HIV, reinforcing the notion that sex is the overwhelming health concern for sexual minorities and the main driver of health and disease.


Life Experience for Gay Men

Gay men and other sexual minorities experience their minority status somewhat differently from other minority groups. One important distinction is that the vast majority of gay men first experience being a minority within their own family. As young gay men become aware of their same sex attraction they also become aware of the fact that they are not entirely like their family members. This sense of being different can lead to feelings of shame, guilt, and alienation as well as fears of rejection. Even in accepting families and societies, the threat of being different and outside the family norm can cause many young gay men to deny and repress their sexual orientation. This identity crisis can lead to low self-esteem and for many leads to bullying, physical and sexual abuse, depression and suicidal ideation.

Life Experience for Gay Men

The process of “coming out” is a period of identity consolidation. During this time, gay men may face disapproval but to varying degrees are able to reconcile internal conflicts and develop a resilient sense of self-worth.

Although Canadian society is often viewed as “tolerant”, acceptance of homosexuality is not universal and gay men continue to experience discrimination and stigma, and are subject to many false assumptions and stereotypes.

In Ottawa, 45% of gay men live in some degree of secrecy.

Gay Men and Healthcare Engagement

Understanding the Health Status and Healthcare Needs of Gay and Bisexual Men in the Ottawa Area

Engagement in Primary Care
Engagement in Primary Care

However, 24% of gay men reported that they have not disclosed their sexual orientation to their primary care provider.

Barriers to Disclosure

Gay men may choose not to disclose their sexual orientation to providers due to:
- Fear of stigma, judgement or negative reactions
- Belief that being gay is not relevant to care
- Lack of rapport
- Sexual orientation was not asked signaling it should not be discussed
- A belief the healthcare provider will be unfamiliar with gay men’s sexuality and life experiences.

Barriers to Disclosure

Things you can do:
- Indicate on your website that you are a gay friendly clinic and knowledgeable in gay healthcare
- Display a rainbow flag on the door to your clinic
- Ask if your patient has sex with men, women or both; has a wife, husband, partner, multiple partners
- Show interest and acceptance
  - “When did you first come out? Who are you out to?”
  - “How long have you guys been together?”

Gay Men’s Health

1. Routine health care
2. Mental health
3. HIV and other sexually transmitted infections
4. Sexual satisfaction
5. Anal health
6. Tobacco use
7. Illicit Drug use

Mental Health

Based on PHQ-4

- Depression 13%
Depression and Anxiety

Of those above cut offs:
- 51% rated their mental health as average or better
- Only 20% had seen a psychologist
- Were less likely to feel comfortable discussing mental health

Mental Health

- 30% reported being somewhat dissatisfied or dissatisfied with their body image
- 20% reported that anxiety or stress interferes with their daily living frequently or always
- 14% reported feelings of sadness interfere with their daily living frequently or always

HIV status by self report

- 80% Negative
- 12% Positive
- 8% Don’t know/never tested

HIV and STI Testing

- Need for HIV test should be based on sexual activity and risk
- Frequency of HIV testing should be based on number and frequency of partners
- Syphilis testing should be linked to HIV testing
- Gonorrhea and Chlamydia testing
  - First catch urine (not midstream)
  - Pharyngeal swab (99% asymptomatic)
  - Rectal swab (70-85% asymptomatic)

Sexual Satisfaction

- 35% experienced erectile dysfunction at least half the time
- 32% were somewhat dissatisfied or dissatisfied with their sex life
- 24% reported sex caused them to feel stressed or anxiety at least half the time
Anal Health
- Only 55% were aware of their risk of anal cancer due to HPV
- Only 15% had discussed anal cancer with their primary care provider
- Only 8% had ever had a anal exam
- In general, there is little to no information on anal care and anal sex.

Tobacco Use
- Some studies have reported higher tobacco use among gay men compared to the general population
- 17% of gay men in Ottawa smoke cigarettes
  - 21% of men in Ontario smoke cigarettes
- Among smokers, 80% had made at least one quit attempt.

Alcohol and Substance Use
- Only 5% reported more than 15 drinks per week
  - 14% for the general population
- 29% reported using marijuana
- 12% reported using illicit drugs
  - 2.4% among Canadian males
- Of those using illicit drugs, only 20% (2.4% of the total sample) used more than 5 times per month

Comprehensive and Informed Healthcare for Gay Men

A new path to Gay Men’s Health
Our goal is to execute a comprehensive research program that addresses gay men’s mental and physical health and repositions HIV prevention into a larger context of health and wellbeing.

Specific Goals:
I) Gay and bisexual men: engage gay and bisexual men in their health.
II) Healthcare providers: support healthcare providers in the delivery of population specific healthcare.
III) Healthcare system: develop new health systems approaches to increase gay and bisexual men’s access to information and care, and provider access to knowledge.
IV) Knowledge: contribute to new knowledge and the development of novel health interventions.
HUGO
Health Unlimited for Guys in Ontario

Accessing Gay Men’s Health Across Ontario

The Ottawa Gay Men’s Health Team

Thank you