Sexual Orientation and Health Disparities

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Sexual Orientation and Health

In Delaware, the LGBTQ+ community experiences disadvantages with a variety of socioeconomic factors. These individuals are more likely to be unemployed, less likely to have a college education and more likely to earn an income less than $24K. All of these socioeconomic disadvantages put LGBTQ+ individuals at risk for poor health. One particular challenge facing the health of the LGBTQ+ population is lack of research.

Spotlight

• “LGB adults... experience more mood and anxiety disorders, more depression, and an elevated risk for suicidal ideation and attempts” (Committee, 2014, p.5).
• LGB youth make up a disproportionate number of the homeless youth population (Committee, 2014, p. 161).
• “LGBT people are frequently the targets of stigma, discrimination, and violence because of their sexual- and gender-minority status” (Committee, 2014, p. 5).
• LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to seek treatment for mental health and substance abuse.

Lack of Research

Research lacks in several areas, including studies focused on bisexual and transgender people; LGBTQ+ subpopulations, especially racial and ethnic groups; children and LGBTQ+ elders.

Conclusions

The LGBTQ+ community makes up 4% of the Delaware population, and this number is growing every year (LGBT Data and Demographics). Because of the stigmas surrounding the community, LGBTQ+ individuals have a special set of health needs, much of which manifests in mental health disparities. While we do know many of the issues that pose barriers to health for sexual and gender minorities, it is crucial to conduct more research in order to understand the full picture. In addition to completing more research, addressing the relevant socioeconomic and cultural factors will help to diminish health disparities for the LGBTQ+ population.

References


Figure 1. Individuals ages 12 and older seen by their primary care provider or a psychiatrist in the past 12 months, California, 2009. Image courtesy of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s National Healthcare Disparities Report, 2013.