

# THE NATIONAL LGBT HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER



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## **LGBT Aging: Addressing Disparities and Health Care Needs**

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Brigham and Women's Hospital  
Instructor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School

# Learning Objectives:

*At the end of this webinar, participants will be able to:*

1. Describe the demographics of older LGBT adults
2. Explain how stigma and discrimination create health care disparities for older LGBT adults
3. Identify the health care needs of LGBT older adults, including:
  - Unique medical concerns
  - Unique psychosocial health concerns
4. List ways to offer health care that are affirming, welcoming, and appropriate



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# CME Disclosures

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Disclosure: No relevant financial relationships.

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# Demographics

*Do you, personally, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?*

	Yes	No	DK/Refused
All Americans	3.4%	92.2%	4.4%

Gallup Daily tracking  
June 1-Sept. 30, 2012

October 18, 2012, "Special Report: 3.4% of U.S. Adults Identify as LGBT: Inaugural Gallup findings based on more than 120,000 interviews" by Gary J. Gates and Frank Newport, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/158066/special-report-adults-identify-lgbt.aspx>



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# Demographics

*Do you, personally, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?*

	Yes	No	DK/Ref
	%	%	%
18 to 29	6.4	90.1	3.5
30 to 49	3.2	93.6	3.2
50 to 64	2.6	93.1	4.3
65+	1.9	91.5	6.5

October 18, 2012, "Special Report: 3.4% of U.S. Adults Identify as LGBT: Inaugural Gallup findings based on more than 120,000 interviews" by Gary J. Gates and Frank Newport, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/158066/special-report-adults-identify-lgbt.aspx>



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# Demographics of Older LGBT Adults

## ❑ Older LGBT Adults:

- 1 million to 2.8 million
- 2 million to 6 million by 2030

## ❑ Economically similar to heterosexuals, except

- Lesbian/bisexual women and same sex female couples have higher rates of poverty than gay/bisexual men and heterosexuals

## ❑ More likely to live in urban areas, but

- LGBT couples counted in all states and over 90% of US counties

Cahill et al. National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Foundation 2000

Gary Gates, "Same-Sex Couples in US Census 2010: Race and Ethnicity," The Williams Institute, 2012

Albeda R et al. "Poverty in the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community" The Williams Institute, March 2009



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# Demographics: Race/Ethnicity

*Do you, personally, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?*

	Yes	No	DK/Ref
	%	%	%
Non-Hispanic white	3.2	93.9	2.8
Black	4.6	90.1	5.3
Hispanic	4.0	90.2	5.8
Asian	4.3	92.0	3.7

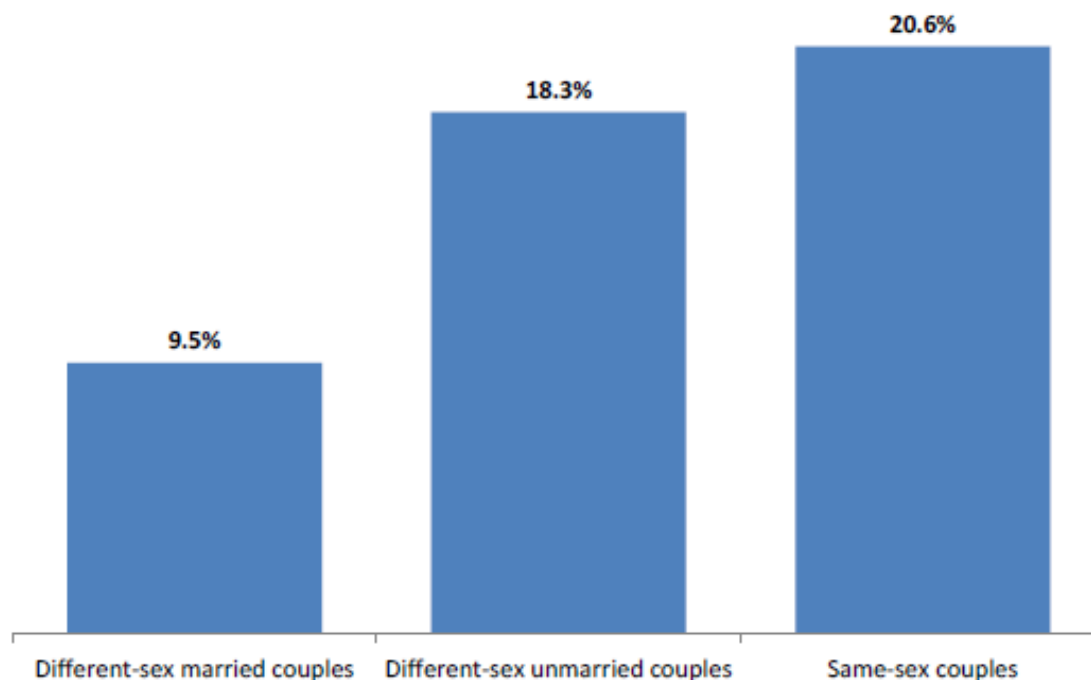
Gallup Daily tracking  
June 1-Sept. 30, 2012

GALLUP®

October 18, 2012, "Special Report: 3.4% of U.S. Adults Identify as LGBT:  
Inaugural Gallup findings based on more than 120,000 interviews" by Gary J. Gates and Frank Newport

# Demographics: Race/Ethnicity

Figure 5. Percent of couples that are interracial/ethnic  
by couple type



Gary Gates, "Same-Sex Couples in US Census 2010: Race and Ethnicity," The Williams Institute, 2012



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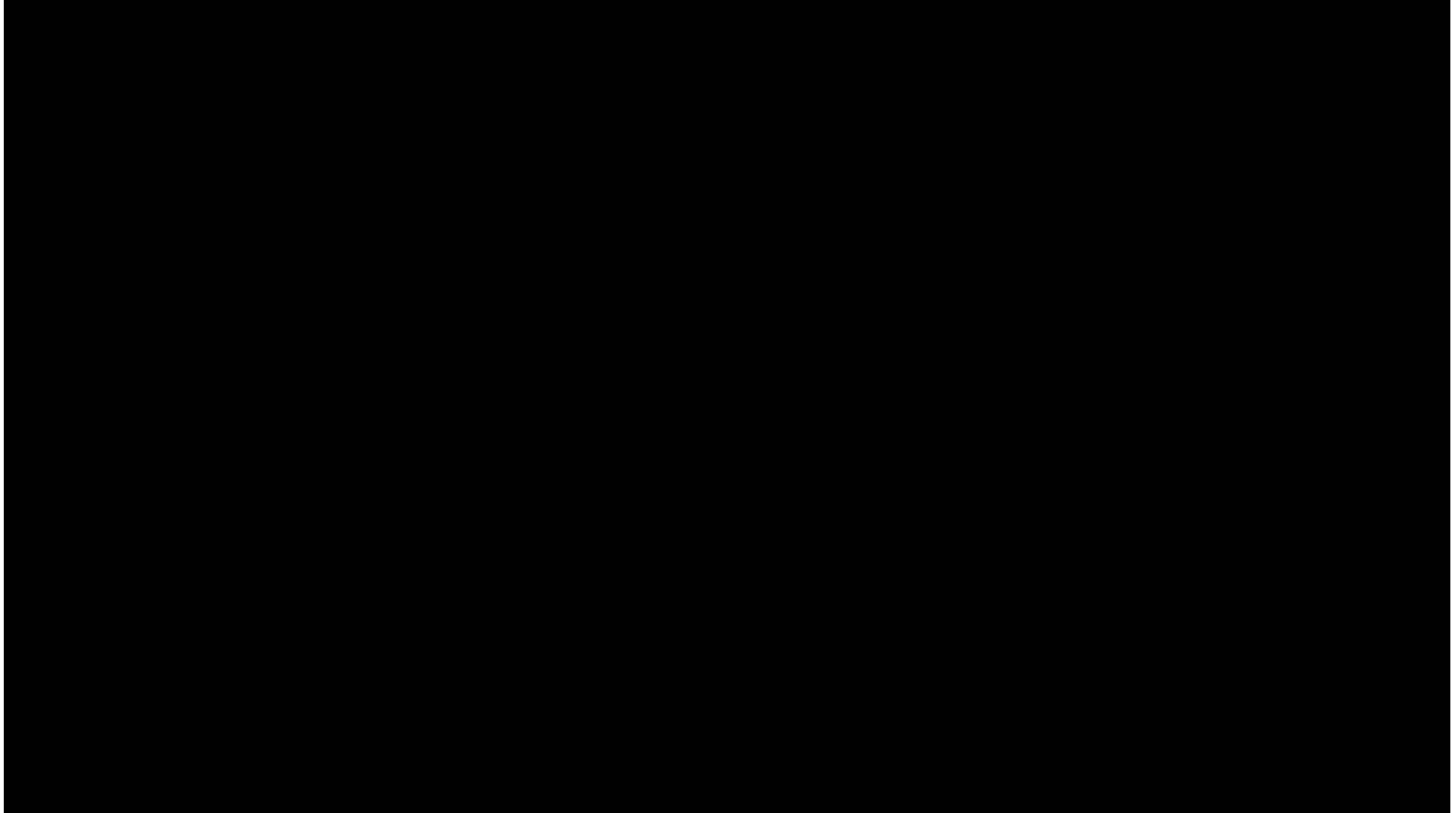


# Case

- ☐ An 82 year old man comes into an outpatient primary care office for an initial visit.
- ☐ Do you think the provider should ask his sexual orientation? Why or why not?
- ☐ Is it important?
- ☐ What barriers would keep a provider from asking?



# "Gen Silent"



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# LGBT Aging in the News

**AP** Associated Press

**The New York Times**

**The Boston Globe**

**denverpost.com**

**abc NEWS**

## Gay Elders' Distinctive Challenges Get Closer Look

By David Crary, The Associated Press, New York

**The New York Times**  
nytimes.com

October 9, 2007

### Aging and Gay, and Facing Prejudice in Twilight

By JANE GROSS

### 'Invisible And Overlooked'

A growing population of lesbian and gay senior citizens seeks recognition for their unique needs and challenges.

By [Jessica Bennett](#) | Newsweek Web Exclusive

Sep 18, 2008

**Newsweek**

### The Love That Will Finally Speak Its Name

It took the death of my dear life partner for me to find the courage to come out of the closet.

Loraine Barr  
NEWSWEEK

Cover this magazine issue dated Sep 3, 2007

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# Healthcare Disparities

Healthy People 2010 and Healthy People 2020:

LGBT Americans are affected by health disparities



Sell R, Becker J. *Am J Public Health*. 2001

Makadon, H. *NEJM* 2006

<http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/default.aspx>



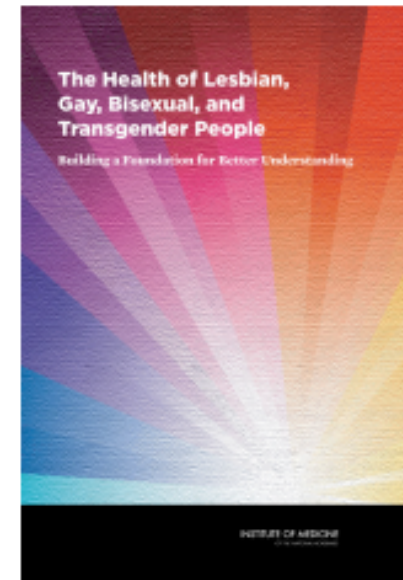
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# Institute of Medicine – March 2011

## The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People

Building a Foundation for Better Understanding



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# Polling Question

- ☐ Have any of your patients over 65 come out as LGBT at a late age?
- Yes
  - No
  - Not Applicable (N/A)



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# Case

- ❑ You are caring for a patient who is a 75-year-old woman who just had a hip fracture repair and is recuperating at a rehab facility.
- ❑ She is listed as “single” on the face sheet.
- ❑ In the room with her is another older woman, whom she introduces to you as her “friend”, and is vague about the details of their relationship.
- ❑ You later find out that they live together and have been partners for 30 years.



# Disclosure and Discrimination



Why is it so hard for her to  
disclose her relationship status?



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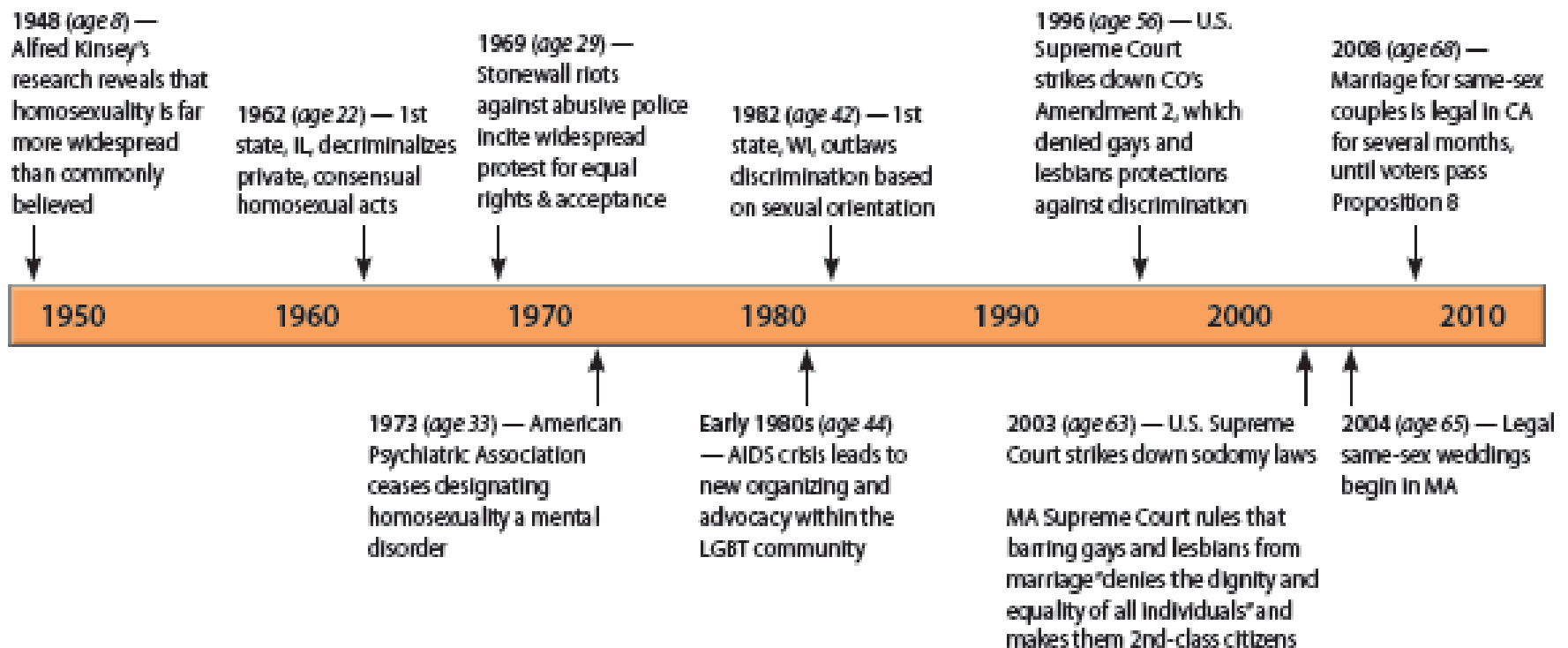
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# A Lifetime of Discrimination

Figure 4: A 70-year-old Lesbian has Seen These Events in Her Lifetime



Source: InfoPlease.com; MAP analysis

Improving the Lives of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Older Adults 3/2010



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# Generational Contrasts

- ❑ The older generation of gays and lesbians may be less likely to have come out of the closet
- ❑ Generations:
  - “Pre-Stonewall”
  - “Post-Stonewall”

**4 POLICEMEN HURT  
IN 'VILLAGE' RAID**

Melee Near Sheridan Square  
Follows Action at Bar

Hundreds of young men went 'on a rampage in Greenwich Village shortly after 3 A.M. yesterday after a force of plain-clothes men raided a bar that the police said was wellknown for its homosexual clientele. Thirteen persons were arrested and four policemen injured.

The young men threw bricks, bottles, garbage, pennies and a parking meter at the policemen, who had a search warrant authorizing them to investigate reports that liquor was sold illegally at the bar, the Stonewall Inn, 53 Christopher Street, just off Sheridan Square.

Deputy Inspector Seymour Pine said that a large crowd formed in the square after being evicted from the bar. Police reinforcements were sent to the area to hold off the crowd.



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# Effects of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

- ❑ 324,029 Americans died of HIV/AIDS 1987-1998
  - Many gay/bisexual men
  - Baby-boomers, then aged 35-44, suffered highest mortality rates
  - 10% of the urban gay male population died
- ❑ Gay Baby-boomer men are a unique subcohort of aging LGBT adults
  - Communities decimated
  - Strengthened the gay rights movement

Gerontologist. 2012 Apr;52(2):255-64



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# Coming Out: the Stonewall Generation

Stonewall generation: Baby boomers

	% of LGBT respondents who are "completely" or "mostly" out	% of LGBT respondents whose families are "completely" or "very" accepting
Lesbians	76%	61%
Gay men	74%	57%
Bisexuals	16%	24%
Transgender	39%	42%

Still Out, Still Aging. TheMetLife Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Baby Boomers March 2010



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# Background of Older LGBT Adults

- ❑ Many who have lived wholly or partially in the closet:
  - Have elaborate constructs to protect their sexual orientation
  - Are at risk of exposure with disability or sickness



[peer.hdwg.org/.../NamingStigmaThroughPictures-ContinuingEducation-Peer\\_Training.pdf](http://peer.hdwg.org/.../NamingStigmaThroughPictures-ContinuingEducation-Peer_Training.pdf)



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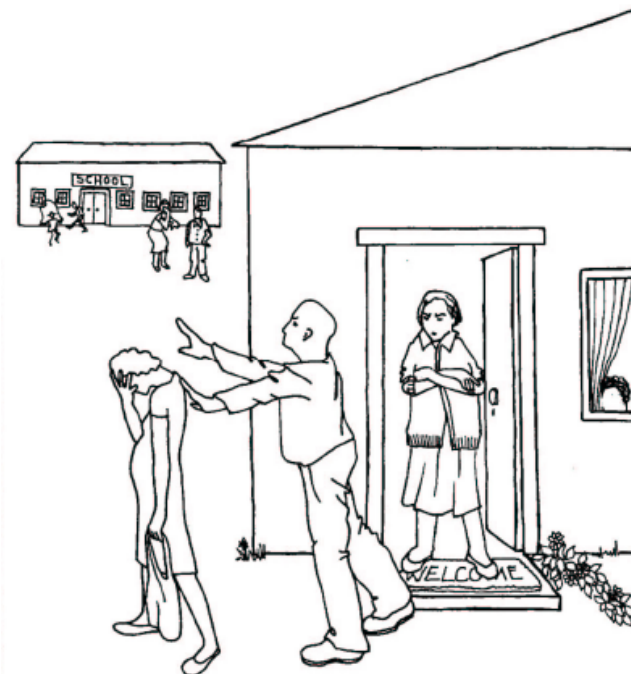
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# Background of Older LGBT Adults

- ❑ Those who have been out are more likely to:
  - Be estranged from children or grandchildren
  - Be single or without children
  - Have extensive 'chosen family' of support networks, which can be threatened by aging and illness



[peer.hdwg.org/.../NamingStigmaThroughPictures-ContinuingEducation-Peer\\_Training.pdf](http://peer.hdwg.org/.../NamingStigmaThroughPictures-ContinuingEducation-Peer_Training.pdf)



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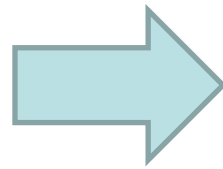
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# Health Impacts of Discrimination in Older LGBT Adults

## Social stressors

- Coming out
- Prejudice
- Stigmatization
- Anti-gay violence
- Internalized homophobia



- Depression
- Suicide
- Risky behavior
- Substance abuse

Brotman, et al. *Gerontologist* 2003

# Mental Health in Older LGBT Adults

- ❑ Major depression
- ❑ Generalized anxiety disorder
- ❑ Bipolar disorder
- ❑ Suicide



Dean, et al. *J Gay and Lesbian Medical Assoc* 2000

D'Augelli, A. and Grossman, A. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 2001



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# Mental Health in Older LGBT Adults

- ❑ Survey of 416 older LGB adults active with LGBT social agencies:
  - 39% considered suicide
  - 12% had suicidal thoughts in the past year

D'Augelli, et al. *Aging Ment Health* 2001

# LGBT Aging Fears

## ☐ Fears of aging:

- Rejection by children and family
- Uncertain support network
- Discrimination in health care, employment, housing and long-term care

Quam and Whitford *Gerontologist* 1992  
MetLife Mature Market Institute 2006

# Fear of Discrimination

## ❑ LGBT baby boomers report (2006 survey):

- Greatest concern of aging was discrimination due to sexual orientation in 32% of gay men and 26% of lesbians
- >50% did not have strong confidence that they will be treated with dignity and respect
- 12% of lesbians had absolutely no confidence that they will be treated respectfully

MetLife Mature Market Institute 2006

# Disclosure and Access to Care

## Fear of discrimination:

- Avoidance of care
- A significant problem in nursing home and assisted living facilities
- Leads to non-disclosure of sexual orientation

## Nondisclosure leads to:

- Inappropriate preventive care and screening recommendations
- Negative affect on the patient-provider relationship
- Perpetuates the invisibility of older LGBT patients

Jonathan Appelbaum. Late Adulthood/Aging. In: Makadon, Mayer, Goldhammer, ed. 1st ed. Fenway Guide to Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Health. Philadelphia: ACP, 2007

# Disclosure of Sexual Orientation for Older LGBT Adults

- ❑ Goal of inquiring into sexual orientation:
  - Provide sensitive care
  - Address unique healthcare needs
  - Identify potential challenges to support systems
  - Provide opportunity for disclosure and better patient-doctor relationship



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# Question

- ❑ Are there unique medical concerns related to sexual orientation that affect older LGBT adults?



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# Overview of Healthcare Concerns in Older LGBT Adults

Gay and Bisexual Men	Lesbian and Bisexual Women	Transgender
HIV/AIDS	Prevention/Screening	HIV/AIDS
Sexually transmitted diseases/sexual health	Sexually transmitted diseases/sexual health	Sexually transmitted diseases/sexual health
Anal papilloma/anal cancer	Breast cancer/gynecological cancer	Preventive care/access to health care
Substance abuse	Substance abuse	Substance abuse
Prostate cancer	Cardiovascular disease	Hormone therapy
Mental health	Mental health	Mental health
Psychosocial issues	Psychosocial issues	Psychosocial issues



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# Health Behaviors Over the Life Course by Sexual Orientation

## ☐ Smoking:

- Lesbians and gay men more likely than heterosexuals when younger
- Lesbians, but not gay men, more likely than heterosexuals when older

## ☐ Alcohol:

- Lesbians and gay men drink more when younger, but no differences when older

Boehmer et al. American Journal Public Health 2012; 102(2): 292-300.



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# Health of Older Gay Men

- ❑ Generally, health issues are same, but worth highlighting:
  - Sexual history and risk factors for STIs are important to address
  - Cardiovascular health: gay men may have higher rates of smoking and recreational drug use when younger
  - Anal Cancer: 43 times more common in gay/bisexual men and 88 times more common in HIV+ gay/bisexual men
  - Prostate cancer



Appelbaum *The Fenway Guide to Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Health* 2007  
Dean et al. *Journal of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association* 2000



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# Health of Older Lesbians

- ❑ Receive less preventive care
  - Access health care services less often
  - Enter health care system later
  - Inappropriate care



Appelbaum *The Fenway Guide to Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Health* 2007

Valanis et al. *Arch Fam Med* 2000

Solarz A. *Lesbian health: Current assessment and directions for the future*. Washington, DC: Institute of Medicine, National Academy Press, 1999



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# Health of Older Lesbians

- ❑ Due to more smoking and obesity, may be more at risk for CAD
- ❑ Cervical Cancer Screening:
  - 29% lesbians did not have routine Pap screening test
    - Non-routine screeners were more likely to fear discrimination and not disclose their sexual orientation
  - Lesbians do need to be screened for cervical cancer



Appelbaum The Fenway Guide to Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Health 2007  
Valanis et al. Arch Fam Med 2000  
J Women's Health 2010; 19(1):125-31; J Women's Health 2010; 19(2):229-37



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# Breast Cancer

- ❑ Tend to have greater prevalence of risk factors for breast cancer
- ❑ National Health Interview Survey, 1997-2003: national survey of 137,000 women, 693 who reported living with same-sex relationship partner
  - Women in same-sex couples had greater age-adjusted risk for fatal breast cancer (RR=3.2, CI 1.01-10.21)
  - No difference in overall risk for mortality

J Women's Health 2010; 19(1):125-31

J Women's Health 2012; 21(5):528-33



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# Medical Concerns for Transgender Older Adults

- ❑ Very little research
- ❑ Discrimination and healthcare disparities
  - More likely to use black-market hormones
  - Less likely to receive preventive care
  - Less likely to have mental health needs met
  - Higher rates of HIV, hepatitis C, and substance abuse
- ❑ Preventive care for the biologic sex
  - Prostate cancer in MTF
  - Ovarian cancer in FTM

Appelbaum *The Fenway Guide to Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Health* 2007

# Transgender Health

- ❑ 70% older transgender adults delayed gender transition to avoid employment discrimination
- ❑ 13% report abusing alcohol or drugs to cope with mistreatment
- ❑ 16% attempted suicide at least once in their lifetimes

Injustice at every turn: A report of the national transgender discrimination survey. (2011). Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Improving The Lives Of Transgender Older Adults: Recommendations for Policy and Practice (2012).

# HIV/AIDS in Older Adults

## Increasing prevalence

- ❑ 37% with HIV/AIDS >50 yo
- ❑ 50% by 2015
- ❑ 53% are in men who have sex with men

## Increasing incidence

- ❑ Increasing incidence in those older than 50 years:
- ❑ 17% new cases of HIV (2009)
- ❑ 24% of new AIDS cases

CDC - HIV/AIDS - Statistics and Surveillance. *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, 21. 2011.



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# HIV Prevention for Older Adults

- ❑ Challenges to providing HIV/AIDS education for older adults:
  - Health professionals' ageism
  - Older adults' reluctance to discuss sexuality
  - Misconception of HIV risk



J Evid Based Soc Work. 2012;9(3):213-30



# Sexual Health in Older LGBT Adults

- ❑ Elderly are sexually active
  - 53% seniors 65 to 74 years old
  - 26% of seniors 75 to 85 years old
- ❑ Elderly are at risk for HIV and other STDs
  - 92% of older adults do NOT use condoms
  - 48% of older LGB adults do not use condoms regularly, and 9% never do



Lindau, et al. *NEJM* 2007

Stall and Catania *Arch Fam Med* 1994



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# Palliative Care Needs

Systematic Review: “Needs, experiences, and preferences of sexual minorities for end-of-life care and palliative care: a systematic review.”

- Health care professionals need training
- Explore sexual orientation
- Avoid heterosexist assumptions
- Recognize importance of partners in decision making

J Palliat Med. 2012 May; 15(5): 602-11



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# End of Life Issues for LGBT Older Adults

- ☐ Comorbidities
- ☐ Decision making
- ☐ Level of disclosure
- ☐ Mental health and stigma
  - Minority stress
  - Internalized homophobia
  - Stigma and misconceptions
- ☐ Discrimination
- ☐ Disenfranchised grief



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# How to ask about sexuality in older adults

- ☐ Don't assume that because your patient is old, that they must be heterosexual
- ☐ Also, don't assume that because your patient is gay, that they will be comfortable with "full disclosure"
- ☐ Language matters



# Language Matters

## ☐ "Are you married?"

- "Who are the important people in your life?"
- "Do you have a significant other?"
- "Are you in a relationship?"
- "Do you live with anyone?"
- "Tell me more about yourself?"



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# Language Matters

## ❑ “Are you sexually active?”

- “Are you in a relationship?”...
  - If “yes”, then ask, “with who”, and then ask are you sexually active with the person, or anyone else?
  - If “no”, then ask, “are you sexually active?”, and “with who?”
- “Do you have your sex with men, women, or both?”
- “Are you in a monogamous relationship?”
- “Have you ever engaged in high-risk sexual behavior?”
- “Do you currently have any worries or problems related to sex?”



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# Interview Strategies for Obtaining the Social/Sexual History in an Older Patient

Try to avoid

- Making assumptions about the gender of the patient's partner (even if married)
- Assuming that patients sexuality is fixed, absolute, and/or lifelong
- Assuming that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is not a difficult issue for many patients
- Forcing labels or outing a patient if they are not ready
- Assuming that all transgender patients want full reconstructive surgery or complete hormonal transformation



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# Interview Strategies for Obtaining the Social/Sexual History in an Older Patient

Create a welcoming environment

- Share some personal history about yourself before inquiring into the social history of your patient
- Join a referral program
- Adapt forms to be inclusive (for example spouse/partner rather than husband/wife)
- Talk with your registration staff and clinic director
- Encourage cultural competency training by your colleagues and staff
- Place an LGBT-friendly symbol, sticker or sign in a visible location
- Have an LGBT-specific magazine or newspaper in the reception area
- Have an open dialogue with patients about their life circumstances

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# Summary

- ❑ Three to eight percent of elderly patients are LGBT
- ❑ LGBT elders have specific medical, psychological, and social needs
- ❑ LGBT elders may have difficulty disclosing their sexual orientation due to past negative experiences and a lifetime of discrimination
- ❑ Health care providers must provide the appropriate support and resources that address and are sensitive to the needs of LGBT elders

# Questions?



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Services & Advocacy  
for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual  
& Transgender Elders

# Resources and National Organizations

- ❑ Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Elders (SAGE)
  - [www.sageusa.org](http://www.sageusa.org)
- ❑ Gay and Lesbian Medical Association
  - [www.glma.org](http://www.glma.org)
- ❑ American Society on Aging
  - [www.asaging.org](http://www.asaging.org)
- ❑ National Lesbian and Gay Task Force
  - [www.thetaskforce.org](http://www.thetaskforce.org)
- ❑ Fenway Community Health Center
  - [www.fenwayhealth.org](http://www.fenwayhealth.org)
- ❑ LGBT Aging Project
  - [www.lgbtagingproject.org](http://www.lgbtagingproject.org)



NATIONAL LGBT HEALTH  
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# Upcoming LGBT Aging Webinars

## LGBT Aging: Social Supports, Outreach, and Policy

**Feb. 6 at 2 pm ET**

Manuel Eskildsen, MD, MPH and Hilary Meyer, JD

### Learning objectives:

1. Describe current research on the psychosocial needs of LGBT older adults
2. Identify services and supports currently available for referral and replication
3. Understand key policy issues affecting LGBT older adults



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# Upcoming LGBT Aging Webinars

## LGBT Aging: HIV Prevention and Primary Care for LGBT Older Adults

**March 27 at 2 pm ET**

Jonathan S. Appelbaum, MD; Harvey Makadon, MD

### Learning objectives:

1. Describe current HIV/AIDS epidemiology and risk factors among older adults
2. Identify treatment and prevention issues in older HIV patients
3. Access and understand screening and treatment guidelines for HIV and co-morbidities found in older HIV patients



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