



Addressing Bisexual Health Disparities

A Bi Local and Equitas Health Conversation
Transforming Care Conference 2017



Bi Local

Our mission is to join together to organize, generate visibility, gather support and give voice to the collective histories and experiences of the bi- pan- and nonmonosexual community in central Ohio

BISEXUAL DEFINITION



“Bisexuals are **people who acknowledge** in themselves **the potential to be attracted** – romantically and/or sexually – **to people of more than one** sex and/or gender, **not necessarily at the same time**, not necessarily **in the same way**, and not necessarily **to the same degree.**” – Robyn Ochs

The Bisexual Community

- Bisexual is used as an umbrella, community label (bisexual +)
 - Not a binary
 - Can include queer, pansexual, fluid sexuality and non-monosexual identities
 - Bisexual may be used with other labels
 - These other labels used fit under the bisexual umbrella
- Studies suggest that 50% of the LGBT community identify as bisexuals- making the "B" the largest makeup of the LGBT spectrum
- Approximately 50% of the trans population identifies as bisexual+
- More than 40% of LGBT people of color identify as bisexual+

Increased Risk

- Higher rates of adverse life events, more suicide attempts, substance abuse, and overall health risks compared to heterosexuals and gays and lesbians ¹
- Highest rates of low self-rated health compared to heterosexuals and gays and lesbians

Increased Risk

- Greater rates of reported health complaints¹
- Bisexuals report feeling stigmatized by both heterosexual and homosexual communities²⁻⁷
 - Isolation
 - Negative impact on overall mental health

Barrier to Care: Negative Stereotypes

- Question Bisexuality as a valid orientation & a stable, healthy identity
- Some Bisexuals are non-monogamous and promiscuous, some are not
 - similar with other sexual preferences

Barrier to Care: Negative (and sometimes false) Stereotypes

- Bisexuals are not confused or immature
 - Though some people change their identity over time, not all end up identifying as gay or straight
- Double discrimination
 - Negative attitudes from the gay and lesbian communities as well as from heterosexuals

Equitas Health Safe Point Program

- Provides drug treatment enrollment, primary care to minimize spread of infectious disease
- Access to new syringes and safer injection education



Equitas Health Safe Point Program

- 2nd quarter 2017 (April-June)
- 1258 clients served
- 85% of participant using heroin



Safe Point 2nd Quarter Demographics

2nd Quarter (April - June) 2017 User Demographics

Orientation	%	Orientation	%
Heterosexual	84.98%	Lesbian	1.03%
Bisexual	8.35%	Other	7.1%
Gay	4.29%	Unreported	0.71%

Barrier to Care: Non Disclosure

Bisexuals are more likely than other sexual orientations to hide or not disclose their orientation



REPORTED NOT DISCLOSING THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION TO ANY MEDICAL PROVIDER

Bisexual Health Concerns

- See article in The Advocate:

“It was abundantly clear that even though I had come out to her, she didn’t know why a sexual history that included more than one gender might put me at risk for certain health concerns.

She didn’t understand that avoiding awkward conversations like this one may lead me to miss preventative care and screenings for things like breast cancer and cervical cancer.

She wouldn’t know to screen me for signs of clinical depression and anxiety, which I and a disproportionate number of bisexual people experience.”

<http://www.advocate.com/commentary/2015/9/17/my-fellow-bisexuals-lets-talk-about-sex>

HEALTH & WELLNESS



Bisexuals face greater physical and mental health disparities than lesbians, gays, and the broader population.

Bisexuals are also less likely to have access to insurance or financial resources for health care and are more likely to have considered or attempted suicide than heterosexuals, gays, and lesbians.

Discussion

What can current data on bisexual usage of Safe Point program teach us about the unique health challenges facing the bi+ community?

How can you apply this data to your own work?