

Asking patients about Sexual and Gender Identity

Rockland Psychiatric Center, 2012

Outline

- ▶ **WHAT** are sexual and gender identity? Definitions
- ▶ **WHY** would we want to ask our patients these questions?
- ▶ **WHO** should we ask about sexual and gender identity?
- ▶ **WHAT** questions should we ask?



WHAT -- Definitions

- ▶ **Sexual Orientation**

- ▶ Whether someone is attracted to same-sex partners, opposite-sex partners, both, or neither

- ▶ **Sexual Identity**

- ▶ The identity a person adopts based on his or her sexual orientation
- ▶ Sexual orientation and sexual identity may not be the same
- ▶ Sexual orientation usually does not change, but sexual identity may change over time



Definitions, cont'd

- ▶ **Gender identity**

- ▶ Whether someone identifies as male, female, transgender, or something else (eg., genderqueer, between two genders)

- ▶ **Gender role or expression**

- ▶ Behaviors and dress that identify a person as masculine or feminine
- ▶ A person doesn't have to be transgender to be different in terms of gender expression, eg., tomboys, sissies, "metrosexual" men, drag performers



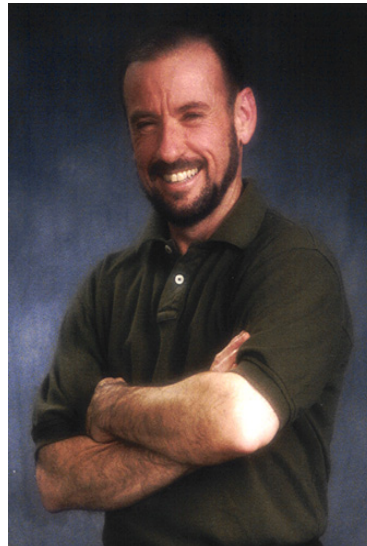
Definitions, cont'd

- ▶ **Lesbian**
 - ▶ A woman attracted to other women
- ▶ **Gay**
 - ▶ Attracted to the same sex; can refer to men or women
- ▶ **Bisexual**
 - ▶ Attracted to both sexes
- ▶ **Transgender**
 - ▶ Someone whose birth sex is different from their gender identity
- ▶ **Queer**
 - ▶ A broader term for LGB people, takes back a previously hated term
- ▶ **Heterosexual/straight**
 - ▶ Attracted to the opposite sex



Definitions, cont'd

- ▶ Sexual minority
- ▶ Gender minority
- ▶ LGBT or LGBTQ or LGBTQQ



Sexual ID and Gender ID

- ▶ Two different concepts
- ▶ Someone who is gay or heterosexual may have a conventional gender expression or not
- ▶ Someone who is transgender may identify as straight, gay, or bisexual



WHY ask about sexual and gender id?

- ▶ The Joint Commission is making us ask!
- ▶ Part of culturally competency
- ▶ Part of person-centered treatment



The JC Standards

- ▶ RR.01.01.01
- ▶ The hospital prohibits discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression.
- ▶ Like asking about ethnicity and preferred language, asking about sexual and gender identity is part of providing person-centered treatment



Ok, but WHY is the JC making us ask?

- ▶ Treatment alliance
- ▶ Risk factors for mental health and health problems
- ▶ Better diagnosis and treatment



Research informs regulation

- ▶ Institute of Medicine Report (2011, *The Health of LGBT People*)
 - ▶ Recommended better research data on demographics, health inequities, intervention research, and transgender needs research
 - ▶ Recommended standardizing and requiring data collection on sexual and gender identity



Risk factors for health problems

- ▶ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) report on top health issues for LGBT populations (2012)
 - ▶ Increased risk for depression, suicide, being a victim of violence for LGBT population
 - ▶ Increased smoking in LGBT population and increased obesity in lesbian population lead to risk of heart disease and cancer
 - ▶ These risks are thought to be due to minority stress



Better Dx and Tx: Martha



WHO should we ask?



WHO to ask, cont'd

- ▶ What if my heterosexual or non-transgender patients get offended at these questions?
- ▶ You could use the procedural defense: “I am required to ask these questions by the Joint Commission.”
- ▶ Much better yet, you can use this as an opportunity for education: “I can’t tell by looking at someone whether they are gay or straight, transgender or not, so I have to ask everyone.”



WHAT questions should we ask?

▶ The 725

- ▶ What is your gender identity: male, female, transgender, other?
- ▶ What is your sexual identity: straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, other?

Transgender or Sexual Orientation

- Male to Female Transgender Female to Male Transgender Heterosexual or Straight Gay or Homosexual Lesbian Bisexual Not Sure Other



WHAT to ask, cont'd

▶ Psychosocial evaluation, Psychiatric evaluation

- ▶ Want to get a fuller picture, not just of identity, but orientation, relationships
- ▶ Ask again about identity: What is your gender identity? male, female, transgender, other?
What is your sexual identity: straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, other?
- ▶ Orientation/attraction: Who are you attracted to? men, women, both?
- ▶ Relationships: Are you in a relationship? With who?
- ▶ Behavior: Are you sexually active with men, women, both? (they can also say neither)



WHY ask all these questions: Larry



Going beyond

- ▶ Add gay and trans-affirmative booklets, posters to unit, waiting area, triage room
- ▶ Educate self and other staff on special issues of sexual and gender minority patients

