Meeting the Needs of the Gay and Lesbian Resident
Michael Bobbitt

CARING FOR LGBT ELDERS
The Fear of Coming Out in Long-Term Care
Michael Bobbitt, MSN, RN

When you last visited your physician, what was your response when he asked about your sexuality?
What were your thoughts or ideas when you studied LGBT health issues in school?
How many CEU’s have you completed on sexuality or LGBT issues?
How many of you have a facility you consider welcoming to LGBT patients?

LGBT PEOPLE ARE INVISIBLE

Objectives:
• To describe the unique needs of LGBT elders and of those caring for them
• To recall the history of the gay movement and to understand how conditioning throughout this group’s life impacts fear of long-term care
• To identify current health care practices that exclude gay elders
• To identify existing barriers to becoming an inclusive community
• To provide interventions
• To promote a culture of inclusivity
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HISTORY OF BIAS IN HEALTHCARE
Survey of physicians from 1982-1999
1982: 39% uncomfortable caring for gay patient
1999: 19%

Survey of general public:
2007: 30% would change physicians if found out he or she was gay/lesbian
35% would change practices if gay person worked in MD office

Survey of medical students:
2006: 15% aware L/G students were mistreated
17% L/G reported hostile environment in medical school

STATISTICS ON AGING GAYS
2010
- 400,000 identified themselves as a same-sex couple
- Up to 3 million LGBT elderly in the US
- Estimated up to 6 million by 2030
- Very little research/virtually no education about this group

MEET JACK AND GEORGE
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Bronx man charged in last week’s Greenwich Village McDonald’s gay bash slash attack, Daily News, 2012

Police investigate gay bashing on Muni, Bay Area Reporter, 2010

Gay men bashed by Police last Saturday in Ft. Worth gay bar, WFAA, NBC 2009

In 1998 Matthew Shepard was murdered after being brutally beaten and tied to a fence to die (national story in print and television around the world)

NEWS: Police Gay Bashing Goes Viral
By Ramon Johnson, About.com Guide March 6, 2013

26-year old bashed in NY for being gay, NY TIMES 2013

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER
DIRECTOR OF THE FBI

• War on gays dates back to 1937
• Started keeping files on “suspected homosexuals in the 40’s and 50’s.
• Almost 4,400 people discharged from the military
• Around 400 were fired from the government for being “suspected homosexual.”
STONEWALL RIOTS
NYC 1969
Resulted from police raids in NYC and most consider this the single event that began today’s gay liberation movement.

FEAR AND ISOLATION

- Come with anxiety related to sexuality
- Culture may impact their ability to be open
- There is a distrust between health care providers and they are not always honest
- Significant stressors about finances, estate planning, spouse
- Fail to seek available resources

EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES OF LGBT ELDERS
ANXIETY RELATED TO SEXUALITY

HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN LEARNING THIS?

CULTURAL ATTITUDES

- Many cultures are in great denial about the rate of LGBT people within their race or ethnicity.
- These cultural differences further impacts the fear and conditioning.
- Some cultures are hostile towards LGBT people.
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THERE IS DISTRUST
With the history of treatment for "being homosexual" within the lifetime of all of today’s LGBT elders along with the years of conditioning, the distrust is understandable.

STRESSORS
- Finances
- Estate Planning
- Spouse

RESOURCES
- Stonewall Communities (senior housing development in Boston, MA). http://www.stonewallcommunities.com
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Research

VERY LITTLE RESEARCH
MANY ARE ISOLATED OR ESTRANGED FROM FAMILY
THREE-FOURTHS, OVER 60, HAVE BEEN VICTIMIZED DUE TO THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION
THEY ARE CONDITIONED TO EXCLUSION, FEAR, DISCRIMINATION
MANY IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS “INVISIBLE” OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND.
SOCIAL DISPARITIES

SOcial disparities

THEY FAIL TO DISCLOSE THEIR SEXUALITY TO THEIR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS
ONE-THIRD HAD EXPERIENCED EXPULSION FROM HOME OR SCHOOL, LOSS OF CUSTODY OF CHILDREN, INCARCERATION FROM BAR RAIDS, AND/OR JOB LOSS.
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PRESBYTERIAN VILLAGE NORTH
DALLAS, TEXAS

THE SURVEYOR
Allowing for a safe environment revealed a lifetime of stories.

CURRENT PRACTICES
• Inclusive Language?
• Partnered
• Domestic Partnership
• Married
• Civil Union
• Current sexual orientation as part of our assessment?
• Current sexual practices/history?
• Gender identity?
• Do we make assumptions?
• Do we provide confidentiality regarding orientation?
EXISTING BARRIERS

- Other residents
- Staff
- Knowledge
- Disclosure
- Inclusive language and paperwork

BARRIERS

What barriers exist in your facility?

INTERVENTIONS

- Use gender neutral language.
- Provide for privacy.
- Be thorough.
- Include sexuality and sexual health
- Assure confidentiality – ask permission to include information on chart or with other staff members.
- Mirror their language.
- Assess resources/family/friends.
- If you slip, apologize.
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AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

References


Gen Silent. (2010). GenSilent.com

U.S. Census Bureau. (2011)