

“Queer(ing) Medicine”: Recentering Queer Experience in Undergraduate LGBT Medical Education via a Student Designed and Led Elective Course

Christopher DeVita, BA¹; Alli Morgan, PhD¹

1. Department of Medical Education, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

BACKGROUND

- The need to incorporate LGBT health in undergraduate medical curricula has been well established¹
- Despite this recognition, there has been uneven implementation of LGBT curricula in US medical schools²
- LGBT programming is most commonly evaluated according to number of curricular hours devoted to LGBT-specific content³
- While our institution (Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai) exceeded the average number of curricular hours, we found that the content was often repetitive and centered around a normative disparities model

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What effect does recentering LGBTQ curricula around queer lived experience instead of disparities have on queer students' educational experiences?
- What might mainstream medicine gain from better understanding queer forms of relation, politics, affect, and embodiment?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Dr. Barbara Warren and the Office for Diversity & Inclusion, Mount Sinai
- Dr. Ann-Gel Palermo
- The Mount Sinai Stonewall Alliance Leadership Board
- The Mount Sinai Human Rights and Social Justice Program
- A special thank you to our course participants and our queer elders

METHODS

Pedagogy as Method

- This project was both an *intervention* in that it empirically supplemented formal LGBT preclinical curricula as well as an *experiment* in how preclinical education itself might be “queered”
- Designed and delivered a 10-week elective course that sought to deliver perspectives from queer and feminist theory, literature, activism, and the arts through a previously established avenue for preclinical elective course development (“Nexus Courses”)
- The course consisted of lectures, small and large group discussions, film screenings, and optional readings, all conducted over Zoom

Queer(ing) Evaluation

- Most pedagogical evaluation relies on positivist conventions of quantitative measurement
- The drive for objectivity often leaves out marginalized identities and experiences⁵
- Drawing on tenets of queer theory, we conducted an autoethnographic study to examine our shifting experiences of the course
- Worked to keep the structure open in a way that allowed for an openness to uncertainty and surprise while remaining reflexive⁶

Queer as noun and verb

“Queering is an act of transforming, decentering, and disrupting social norms and traditions in favor of reorienting focus towards that which is silenced, erased, hidden, lost, marginalized, or legitimized.”⁴

Participants registered for the course	28
Participants who attended at least one session	41

Table 1. Number of participants

<i>Medical Gatekeeping and Diagnosis</i>	Jack Drescher, MD & Kenneth Ashley, MD
<i>Extra-Medical Forms of Care</i>	Hil Malatino, PhD
<i>Minority Stress</i>	Chase Anderson, MD
<i>Poly and Kink Aware Care</i>	Jamie Steele, PhD, LMFT
<i>Intersex History and Advocacy</i>	Elizabeth Reis, PhD
<i>Queer Health in a Changing Climate</i>	Markus Boos, MD, PhD
<i>The Queer Pharmacopoeia</i>	Aaron Lord, MD; James Krellenstein PrEP4All
<i>Queer Advocacy: The Art of the Op-Ed</i>	Jack Turban, MD

Table 2. List of topics/speakers

FINDINGS

- The course drew students from beyond the medical school and included other graduate students, faculty, residents, and staff
- While almost all participants identified with queerness in some fashion, they came with varying levels of exposure to queer history and theory
- Laying the conditions for “light structure,” rather than a traditional lecture format, created opportunity to adopt queer modes of relation among participants that allowed discussion to naturally span and cross scale (e.g. from the individual, to the class, to medicine writ large)⁷
- Over the course of 10 weeks, conversation shifted from how we can improve LGBT curricula to how queer insight can inform medicine, more broadly

CONCLUSIONS

- There's an appreciable difference between *LGBT education* and *queer education*
- Queer education involves a critical consideration of not only course content but the modes of delivery and methods of evaluation, including the theoretical guidelines and assumptions that inform them
- Underscores the importance of having educators and students with academic and life experience beyond medicine

BARRIERS

- Queer forms of evaluation are not deemed “evidence” according to prevailing norms within educational research
- This course relied on unpaid student labor
- Limited reach among non-queer students

REFERENCES

- ¹ Hollenbach, Andrew D., Kristen L. Eckstrand, and Alice Dreger, eds. *Implementing curricular and institutional climate changes to improve health care for individuals who are LGBT, gender nonconforming, or born with DSD: a resource for medical educators*. Association of American Medical Colleges, 2014.
- ² Nowaskie, Dustin Z., and Anuj U. Patel. “How much is needed? Patient exposure and curricular education on medical students' LGBT cultural competency.” *BMC medical education* 20, no. 1 (2020): 1-8.
- ³ Obedin-Maliver, Juno, Elizabeth S. Goldsmith, Leslie Stewart, William White, Eric Tran, Stephanie Brenman, Maggie Wells, David M. Fetterman, Gabriel Garcia, and Mitchell R. Lunn. “Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender-related content in undergraduate medical education.” *JAMA* 306, no. 9 (2011): 971-977.
- ⁴ Catalpa, Jory Mica. “Queering Evaluation: An Autoethnographic and Phenomenological Analysis of a Peer-Led Healthy Relationships Program Designed for Queer and Transgender Youth of Color.” PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2020.
- ⁵ Halberstam, Jack. *The queer art of failure*. Duke University Press, 2011.
- ⁶ Valocchi, Stephen. “Not yet queer enough: The lessons of queer theory for the sociology of gender and sexuality.” *Gender & society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 750-770.
- ⁷ Poirier, Lindsay, Dominic DiFranzo, and Marie Joan Kristine Gloria. “Light structure in the Platform for Experimental Collaborative Ethnography.” In *Web Science 2014 Workshop Interdisciplinary Coups to Calamities*. 2014.