



# Barriers and Opportunities to Hosting an In-Person Medical Conference Addressing LGBTQ+ Healthcare In Texas.



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## Introduction

- The Out for Health conference is an annual, medical student-run conference held in Texas that focuses on medical issues affecting the LGBTQ+ community. The 2022 theme of the conference was “If You Only Knew My Story”, to emphasize the impact of narrative storytelling on trust in the physician-patient relationship. This was the first medical conference hosted at the new Anne Burnett Marion School of Medicine at Texas Christian University. It had an attendance of over 180 people, with the opening remarks delivered by Admiral Rachel Levine, 17th Assistant Secretary for Health, US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); and keynote speakers Dr. J.P. Sanchez, Executive Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, New Mexico Health Sciences; and Dr. Monique Gary, Breast Surgical Oncologist, Medical Director of the Grand View Health/Penn Cancer Network.
- This topic review is encourage other medical students and health care professionals to host conferences specific to the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals.



Photo of Burnett SOM students with Admiral Rachel Levine. From Left to Right: Samantha Finkenstaedt, MS3, Matthew Pagano, MS3, Admiral Levine, Vandana Garg, MS4, Maddie McCracken, MS2.

## New School, New Conference

- As a new medical school, we were thrilled to be a part of an annual tradition shared by fellow Texas medical schools, and for an opportunity to be more involved with our community, students, and leaders in the movement to alleviate LGBTQ+ health disparities.
- Barriers to hosting and LGBTQ+ conference in Texas:
  - Safety of attendees and presenters: event held in state with increasing restrictions to providing LGBTQ+ healthcare
  - Social media backlash: organizers made aware of online counter-protest to event
  - Lack of institutional support: no established framework to create a conference at a new medical school
  - Securing funding
  - Health concerns associated with COVID-19 pandemic: the past two conferences were held virtually; first conference held in person since 2019
  - Cost of conference attendance: these included travel and lodging expenses

## A Medical Conference for the Community

- The Help Center for LGBT Health and Wellness in Fort Worth was a major contributor to this conference.
- The HELP Center has focused on supporting the LGBTQ+ community of Fort Worth since 1994.
  - The center provides services such as PrEP, HIV/STD testing and Condom of the Month Club free of charge to the North Texas LGBTQ+ community regardless of insurance status.
- Through the HELP Center, we were able to link future providers to active community resources
  - We were able to mix public health resources with medical education and advocacy for our community.

## Conference Sessions and Feedback

- Sessions focused on the broad and often overlooked aspects of LGBTQ+ Care, including sessions on inclusive intake documentation, using gender-neutral terms, and never assuming a patient’s story.
- A survey was sent to 180 attendees, with 12 responses
  - 100% were very satisfied with the variety of topics presented at the conference
  - 91.7% strongly agreed they were happy with the amount of information presented during sessions; 8.3% agreed with this statement
- Most attended sessions included:
  - “Hear My Whole Story” presented by Dr. J.P. Sanchez
  - “How Patients Suffer When We Assume” presented by Dr. Frank Sloan
  - “Peripartum Care of Transgender and Nonbinary Patients” presented by Dr. Megan McCracken

## If You Only Knew My Story

- Our goal was to reduce assumption-making in a clinical setting by placing an emphasis on the patient’s entire story to contextualize their experience and health care needs.
- By identifying the intersubjectivity, relationality, personhood and embodiment, and action toward justice of a patient’s narrative, we aimed to identify ways to build trust in patient-physician relationships.



## Conclusion and Further Work

### Limitations

- Low feedback response
  - We had difficulty obtaining responses from attendees to have adequate data for future research.
  - We recommend providing opportunities for feedback directly after the sessions to increase response rate.
- Advertising the conference
  - The major feedback we received was poor advertising, as more members of the community would have liked to attend.
  - As the conference was mostly advertised through social media and word-of-mouth, this addresses the limitation of social media on expansion of attendance.
  - We recommend increased physical advertisements (fliers, posters, etc.) in local clinics, hospitals, and businesses.

### Future areas of research

- By spreading awareness of the conference through improved advertising, increased participation can lead to more interactive sessions and expand the knowledge of LGBTQ+ health disparities.
- We also look forward to future conferences increasing student involvement with community LGBTQ+ centers, and including conference sessions to medical curricula to improve student confidence and knowledge in treating LGBTQ+ patients.

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