Histories of lesbian health activism

LGBT History Conference,
University of Manchester.

Prof Julie Fish
Director, Centre for LGBTQ Research
Health- a key focus of activism

- Being lesbian, gay or bisexual was considered a mental disorder in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) II*;
- Not removed from the ICD until 1992;
- Use of ECT conversion therapy until 1996.

S. 28 Local Govt Act 1988
Nothing above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of treating or preventing the spread of disease
Theoretical approaches

- Inclusion-and-difference policy paradigm (Epstein, 2003; 44)
- The threads of the history of state centred health advocacy intertwined with grassroots social movements in health
- Raises crucial questions about the politics of sexuality, health, identity and belonging
- Notions of equality of treatment
Forms of activism

• Iconic activism:
  - abseiling lesbians;
  - storming of 6 news;

• Grassroots social movements;

• Quotidian activism
Sites of activism:  
In and Against the state

In the state:
Sexual health clinics:
  - Bernhard; Audre Lorde, Vita Clinic, Glasgow
  - STIs & cervical screening
GSM: WOW – self help groups; LesBeWell, SHADY
Information as health activism

Women's Health
Newsletter 29
Lesbian Health

Breast Cancer Awareness
Breast cancer kills more women than any other form of cancer in Britain. If discovered early, there is a better chance of a successful recovery.

Breast cancer is an important issue for dykes...

- Most of us either do not have children or have them much later in life. This increases the risk of breast cancer. A woman who does not attend family planning clinics will have less access to information on this and other health issues.
- Many of us may drink and/or smoke heavily – this also puts us at higher risk.
- If you're not out to your GP or he/she is not dyke-friendly, they will not see you as being at a higher risk.

Breast cancer is not an older woman's problem. It is not a straight woman's problem. Look after yourself: check out the simple self-examination guide inside this leaflet.

Get breast aware with the Lesbian Avengers!
How to be LGBT Friendly

30 Practical Ways to Create a Welcoming Environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People

National LGBT Health Summit 2012

In the Pink
Providing Excellent Care for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People
A Practical Guide for GPs and other Health Practitioners

NHS
Leicester City

Prescription for Change
Lesbian and bisexual women’s health check 2000

LGBT foundation ♥ WOMEN

Check out our New Guide!
Supporting Lesbian & Bisexual Women

In the Pink
Providing Excellent Care for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County
A practical guide for GPs and other health practitioners

Improving health for all. Valuing difference and promoting equality

Coming Out About Breast Cancer
Research Report February 2010
Lesbian and bisexual women’s experiences of breast cancer

breast cancer care

Lesbian and bisexual women and breast cancer

Cervical screening in lesbian and bisexual women: a review of the worldwide literature using systematic methods.

Julia Fish
Approaches to health activism

• With one or two notable exceptions, a lot of the LGBT health work we do relies on the energy and commitment of a few dedicated individuals who make change happen. I think this has been the case for too long. I spoke to Jayne Kavanagh last week about her work to setting up two sexual health clinics in London for lesbian and bisexual women in the mid 1990s. I said that was quite an achievement at the time as section 28 was still on the statute books. She explained her consultant was a gay man and his immediate response to her proposal was: yes of course.

• In January this year, The House of Commons women’s and equality committee published a long awaited enquiry into what is needed to bring about equality for trans people. It documented the high rates of attempted suicide, deaths in custody of two trans women, abuse and violence which undermines trans people’s quality of life and well being. We recognise that for every Lauren Laverne and Caitlyn Jenner there is a Joanne Latham or a Lucy Meadows. Her shameful treatment by the press led to her taking her own life in March 2013.
What can we learn from lesbian health activism in times of austerity?

• Research in lesbians’ health has often been accomplished on shoestring budgets or by lesbian activists working in a voluntary capacity.

- Q in House of Lords in 2014;
- WSW strategy - PHE;
- CMO led roundtable on LB women’s health.
References