Taking action on LGBT health & social care inequalities

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The right to health for LGBT people

- The Yogyakarta Principles - a universal guide to human rights and sexual orientation and gender identity call for all states to ‘develop and implement programmes to address discrimination, prejudice ... which undermine the health of persons because of their sexual orientation or gender identity’ (IHSR, 2007: 22).

Social determinants of health for LGBT people

- Healthy lifestyles
  - Mental health
- Experiences of discrimination
- Living and working conditions
- Communication skills/attitudes
- Lack of knowledge of LGBT health issues
  - Lack of research

- age
- social class
- ethnicity
- disability
- gender
- rural/urban
The Cycle of Invisibility

We don’t know how many LGBT people have cancer

Lack of research

Health promotion materials

LGBT people’s bodies the same assumptions that experiences of health the same

LGBT people don’t come out

Formal and informal support systems
Doctors never talked in front of patient as if they were not there

Always treated with respect and dignity by hospital staff

Never felt treated as a set of cancer symptoms rather than as a whole person

Hospital staff always did everything they could to control their pain

Patient was given information about support / self help groups for people with cancer
Funded by the NCAT as part of the National Cancer Equalities Initiative
Small scale qualitative study
One of only two UK studies about breast cancer in lesbian and bisexual women
Coming out to professionals

We had never particularly come out to them. Yes it’s fear, it’s really a little bit of fear about how are they going to treat you? Are they going to treat you different? Are they going to make things awkward for you?

Edna Campbell

Audre Lorde

Pat Battle

Lesbian women with breast cancer
Accessing support

I didn’t access any support groups because I had gone along... (to a) weekend.. in the all the bits where we went off and had discussions, all really that was being talked about was their relationships with their husbands. ...And so I just felt very uncomfortable. It was staying away in (a Northern city) so even the kind of social spaces, I already felt quite excluded...
Involving partners

My partner had breast cancer and although the care she received generally was good, our relationship was never acknowledged and at best I was treated as her 'friend' which at times we found difficult and stressful. I think if I had been a male partner, the health professionals would have included me more in discussions rather than turning their back to me and seeing me as 'irrelevant' when I went with her to the hospital etc". 
Developing professional knowledge about breast cancer in lesbian and bisexual Women

Knowledge exchange programme
Aims:
• To make an impact on policy and practice
• To translate research findings into practice

ESRC knowledge exchange programme RES-192-22-0111
Influencing cancer policy
Launched at Breast Cancer Care, Southwark.

Cancer service users talked about their experiences to an audience of service users, cancer professionals and voluntary and statutory organisations.

Briefing presented to NCEI in April 2011 by Breast Cancer Care and widely disseminated
Developing practice - training

- Knowledge of the issues
- Experience
- Environment
- Signposting/referrals
- Training/Support
- Communication skills
- Good practice

Seminar for cancer and social care professionals
Tues 28 February 2012
Service user involvement
Macmillan GP
Macmillan T & D
Developing practice – guidance for practitioners

- Identifying the issues
- 6 case studies from practice
- Dissemination through Macmillan and to seminar delegates
Group work: Questions for discussion and case studies

- How many of you have learned about LGBT health and social care issues in social work training?
- Is it important to know about sexual orientation? Why/ Why not?
- Is it the user’s responsibility to disclose their sexual orientation/gender identity?
LGBT health inequalities: key readings


Fish, J. (2010). “It's a mixed up, muddled up, shook up world, except for Lola”: transforming health and social care for trans people. *Diversity in Health and Care, 7*, 87-89.


Social work and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people
Making a difference

JULIE FISH