Trans-Affirming Clinical Language

Supporting trans patients, binary and non-binary, requires developing a safe, inclusive environment that goes beyond the clinical consultation itself.

Asking about, recording and using information about a patient in a trans-affirming way is paramount when building a trusting and therapeutic relationship. Providing context and explaining why you are asking for personal information is helpful too, for example, when asking about a name that you may require for Medicare purposes.

Setting a welcoming tone

With new patients, it's good to be explicit that you welcome trans patients. Even if this does not apply directly to them, they may have a family member or friend in need of your care.

> "I let all my new patients know early on that I work inclusively with people of all genders. Therefore, I welcome you to share anything that you feel is relevant for me to know so I can provide you with the best possible care. If there is ever anything about your body, your gender, your identity, or your sexual health that you want to discuss or ask questions about, please don't hesitate to do so."

Anatomy

Many trans people have complicated feelings about their bodies, especially genitals or secondary sex characteristics. The best practice is to ask your patients what words they prefer to use for their body, but if in doubt, we recommend the following neutral language.

TRY	INSTEAD OF
Upper body	Breast / Chest
Erogenous or erectile tissue / External genitals / Genitals	Penis
Erogenous or erectile tissue	Clitoris
External genital area	Vulva
Opening of the genitals	Introitus / Opening of the vagina
Internal genitals / Genitals	Vagina
External gonads	Testes / Testicles
Internal gonads	Ovaries
Internal reproductive organs	Female reproductive organs

Once you know the words a person uses to describe their body, it's important to use those words, and to record them in your medical notes so that the service can affirm your patient at any point of contact.

Everyday medical language

So much of the way we talk about medicine and bodies is gendered by habit, and this can be invalidating and distressing for trans patients, which in turn creates barriers to health. Practicing with different language that affirms trans patients means more welcoming and accessible services for all patients.

TRY	EXAMPLE	INSTEAD OF
Person with _____ People with _____ Anyone with _____	If a person with a prostate has urinary symptoms, they should speak with their doctor.	man with... males with... male-bodied people...
Person who has _____ People who have _____ Anyone who has _____	We recommend that anyone who has a cervix consider having a cervical screen	woman who has... females who have... female-bodied people...
_____ may occur _____ can begin You may experience _____	Pregnancy **may occur** without contraception. Hair loss **can begin** at any age after puberty. **You may experience** cramps as a side effect.	women may become... male pattern balding... women may experience...

Person-centred care

Many exams, tests, treatments, and medications may be specific to a person's current anatomy, hormone levels, or other attributes that you cannot see just by looking at them. Therefore, the gender marker on a medical record, or knowing a patient's sexual orientation might not be helpful when assessing the care that is most needed or suitable.

By asking questions relevant to the care you are providing, you can support your trans patients by looking after their specific needs, rather than making assumptions.

TRY	INSTEAD OF
Those presumed female at birth / Those presumed male at birth	Biological female / Biological male / Cis female / Cis male
Cisgender	Not trans / Normal / Real
Phenotypical development	Natural / Normal development
Natal genitals (genitals at birth)	Cis genitals
Neo genitals (surgically reconfigured genitals)	Post-operative
Novo genitals (natal genitals altered by hormones)	Cis genitals
Common	Regular / Correct / Right
Hair loss	Male pattern balding
Internal exam / Cervical screening	Pelvic exam
Looks healthy	Looks normal
Atrophy of the internal genitalia tissue	Vaginal atrophy
Monthly bleeding	Period / Menses
Physical arousal / Hardening of erectile tissue	Erection
External condom / Internal condom	Male condom / Female condom
Receptive sex / Insertive sex	Penetrative sex / normal sex
Frontal sex	Vaginal sex
Pregnant person	Pregnant woman
Parenthood	Motherhood / Fatherhood
Breast/Chest feeding	Breastfeeding

This resource was developed by Trans Care BC, Canada and adapted with permission, thank you!

TransHub is ACON's digital information and resource platform for all trans and gender diverse people in NSW, their loved ones, allies and health providers.

For more information and resources, visit: **transhub.org.au**