Treating Sistagirls, Brothaboys and Gender Diverse Mob

The Q&A document aims to emphasise how to connect with transgender and gender diverse patients in an appropriate way. Please note that this document should be complemented by workplace training.

Question

What is gender-neutral language?

Gender-neutral language helps to eliminate assumptions about gender and sex.

> ***Example:*** *instead of saying 'this young man requires...' say 'this patient requires...'*

Question

What is the difference between sex and gender?

Sex refers to the physical, hormonal, chromosomal and genital make up that corresponds to the box that doctors tick on our birth registry. Gender refers to cultural identity and roles in society.

Question

How do I use gender-neutral language for sex and relationships?

For sexual health screenings and relationships, you can use gender-neutral terms like 'partner(s)' or 'lover(s)'. When asking questions to determine which tests are necessary, refer to the types of sex 'penetrative', 'oral', 'vaginal', 'anal', 'giving', 'receiving'.

Question

What language can I use to refer to male or female related illnesses or symptoms?

Does the illness or symptom relate to sex-specific body parts? In which case you can use phrases like "for people with uteruses/ovaries/testes." Does it relate to hormone levels? You can use phrases like 'for people with higher levels of oestrogen/testosterone'.

Question

How should I write notes about my patients?

Record keeping is a crucial part of effective care for Sistagirl, Brothaboy and gender diverse patients.

Ask your patient which pronouns they use, if their pronouns do not match their Medicare recorded sex, this is fine. If you are unfamiliar with gender-neutral pronouns, try your best and check with the patient as you write, be open to writing your notes in a way that does not misgender your patient.

Ensure that you keep clear and transferrable notes on which treatments a patient is undergoing to avoid risks related to sudden loss of access to care in the event you are away or leave your workplace. There are serious physical and emotional consequences for transgender patients who are no longer able to access hormones, specialists or support services because they are not able to renew prescriptions or referrals.

Question

What information is appropriate to give to another doctor during a handover?

- Pronouns
- Note if their name is different from their name on ID documents
- Any information relevant to current or previous treatments
- If in doubt, ask your patient what information they want passed on.

Question

Should I ask if my patient wants to have Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) or Gender Affirmation Procedure?

Not all transgender people want to transition hormonally or via surgeries. You want to provide a service to transgender patients where they feel safe to ask for these things if they want that, otherwise simply treat them for presenting symptoms and issues.

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Question

How do I know if a patient is ready for HRT?

Informed consent models encourage GPs to enable transgender and gender diverse people to access hormones with appropriate care for managing hormonal changes. Previous gatekeeper models have encouraged transgender and gender diverse people to access hormones in more risky ways without any ongoing care.

Question

When should I refer someone to an endocrinologist?

When someone expresses they wish to transition hormonally. This may be expressed in a number of different ways so confirm insinuations or requests with questions.

> ***Example:*** *Does that mean you would like some more information about accessing hormones?*

Question

What is gender-affirming surgery?

Gender-affirming surgery is any surgical procedure that a transgender person undertakes to align their gender-identity with their physical body. This can include removal or creation of breasts, removal of internal sex-organs, or reconstruction of genitals.

Question

How do I ask if my patient has had surgery?

Unless it is relevant to the treatment required by your patient, keep questions regarding your patients surgery status to a time when they initiate that conversation.

Question

What if my patient wants to have surgery?

If your patient states they wish to have a gender affirming procedure, they will need a referral from you to see a surgeon. In some cases, depending on the surgeon and the procedure, they may also need referral from a psychiatrist or psychologist.

Question

Where can I go for more information about treating transgender and gender diverse patients?

Equinox Diverse Health Centre has a range of GP specific online resources: equinox.org.au/resources/

TransHub offers more information about medical affirmation processes and procedures from a trans-centered perspective:
www.transhub.org.au/clinicians
www.transhub.org.au/medical

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