

Abstract

Purpose

Despite indications that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) patients have unique needs when seeking healthcare, the experiences of LGBTQ patients in the context of cancer care have not been fully explored. This qualitative study investigated recommendations offered by LGBTQ patients with cancer for improving cancer care.

Methods

Two hundred seventy-three LGBTQ people across the USA who had been diagnosed with cancer completed an online survey that included open-ended questions. Using responses to these questions, two researchers independently conducted open coding. A code book was generated collaboratively and the data were coded independently. Codes were clustered and refined and the data were independently re-coded.

Results

Five themes emerged. LGBTQ patients with cancer: (1) are affected by providers' LGBTQ-specific knowledge and skills, assumptions, and mistreatment; (2) negotiate disclosure of identities based on safety of clinical encounters; (3) have differing experiences based on multiple intersecting identities; (4) receive more effective care when members of their support networks are included; and (5) are self-advocates and undergo transformative experiences in the face of morbidity and marginalization.

Conclusions

LGBTQ cancer survivors report challenges accessing competent cancer treatment. To address this, cancer care providers should provide safe clinical encounters, inquire about and respond professionally to patients' identities and identifiers, include chosen support people, provide care relevant to patients' gender identities, and address treatments' effects on sexuality. Training providers about diverse LGBTQ communities and acknowledging the strengths of LGBTQ patients with cancer may improve provider/patient relationships. Provider training could be created based on these principles.

Abstract

Over the last two to three decades, advances in clinical practice with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals have been

extensive. Many clinical social workers now incorporate LGBTQ-affirmative approaches into their practice, and a number of social workers have contributed to the literature on clinical practice with sexual minority clients. Despite these advances, we still require specialized knowledge to understand a number of LGBTQ-related mental health issues. The *Clinical Social Work Journal's* first special issue on clinical practice with LGBTQ populations emphasizes psychotherapy techniques that acknowledge and also address social forces (e.g., transphobia, homophobia, and heterosexism) that affect the psychosocial functioning of LGBTQ clients. The special issue focuses on LGBTQ populations, such as transgender and bisexual individuals, sexual minority youth, and older adults, and psychotherapy modalities informed by a number of clinical and theoretical approaches. These in-depth articles offer guidance to clinical social workers who need to expand their knowledge of LGBTQ-related mental health issues and also provide those with existing knowledge an opportunity to refine their clinical skills and sharpen their thinking.