



ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to explore gender affirming healthcare and the effects it has on the sexual health behaviors of transgender individuals. The present study was a secondary analysis of the data from Transpop U.S. Transgender Population Health Survey. The sample for the present study included participants (N = 274) who self-identified as transgender. Data collected from a self-report survey included experiences of gender affirming health care and self-reported frequency of STI and HIV testing. Inferential statistics revealed insignificant results related to the impact of gender affirming care on sexual health behaviors among transgender individuals. While the findings from the present study were insignificant, this study highlights areas to be considered by future researchers and emphasizes the importance of gender-affirming healthcare on the overall health and wellbeing of the transgender population.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of the study was to explore gender affirming healthcare and the effects it has on the sexual behaviors of transgender individuals.

This study proposes the following questions:

- 1) What is the effect of anticipated stigma (i.e., concerns about healthcare being gender affirming) on sexual health behaviors among transgender individuals?
- 2) What is the effect of experiences of gender affirming healthcare on sexual health behaviors among transgender individuals?

HYPOTHESES

- 1) Anticipated stigma will decrease positive sexual health behaviors among transgender individuals.
- 2) Experiences of gender affirming healthcare will increase positive sexual health behaviors among transgender individuals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- There are about 1.4 million adults in the United States who identify as transgender (Van Gerwen et al., 2020).
- 49.6% of transgender women have HIV and 8.3% of transgender men have HIV (Van Gerwen et al., 2020).
- While these rates of HIV are high, research indicates that HIV testing among this population is low; only about 35% of transwomen and 31% of transmen have had an HIV test in their lifetime (Van Gerwen et al., 2020).
- Despite having unique healthcare needs, transgender individuals experience several barriers to accessing adequate healthcare (Puckett et al., 2018).
- These barriers include a lack of competent providers, discrimination, transphobia, financial barriers, and being denied care altogether (Puckett et al., 2018).

RESULTS

- There was no significant relationship found between anticipated stigma and the frequency of STI/HIV testing among participants.
- There was no significant relationship found between experiences of gender affirming healthcare and STI/HIV testing among participants.
- These unexpected results could be due to several reasons, such as many transgender individuals choose to receive even non-transition related care from transgender health specialists rather than other primary care doctors, negating the possibility of stigmatization or lack of knowledge (Puckett et al., 2018).
- Other unknown factors could explain these results as well, such as financial barriers or relationship status.

METHODS

- The current study is a secondary analysis of the data from Transpop U.S. Transgender Population Health Survey.
- The sample was collected from April 2016-August 2016 and again from June 2017-December 2018.
- Participants were randomly sampled by Gallup, Inc.
- To participate in the study, participants were required to personally identify as transgender, be over the age of 18, have an education level above the sixth grade and speak English.
- The total sample for the study was (N= 274).
- The independent variables for this study were anticipated stigma and experiences of gender affirming healthcare
- The dependent variables for this study were frequency of testing for STIs and frequency of testing for HIV
- The demographic variables for this study were age, race, gender, sexual identity, income, education, relationship status

Correlations Analysis of Anticipated Stigma and Frequency of Testing

Independent and Dependent Variables	r_s	df	p
Anticipated Stigma and Frequency of Testing for STIs	.104	265	.09
Anticipated Stigma and Frequency of Testing for HIV	.065	257	.30

Correlations Analysis of Experiences of Gender Affirming Healthcare (How Knowledgeable Doctor is of Transgender Health) and Frequency of Testing

Independent and Dependent Variables	r_s	df	p
Experiences of Gender Affirming Healthcare and Frequency of Testing for STIs	.018	123	.85
Experiences of Gender Affirming Healthcare and Frequency of Testing for HIV	.024	119	.80

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

- A majority (68.2%) of participants identified as White, which limits the generalizability of the results as this does not represent the population of transgender individuals in the United States.
- The current study is a secondary analysis of a cross-sectional study, which limits the current study's ability to understand patterns over time.
- Participants were randomly sampled, which limited the possibility of selection bias.
- There was a relatively large sample size for this study (N = 274).

CONCLUSIONS

- While the findings from the present study were insignificant, this study highlights areas to be considered by future researchers.
- Further research is warranted to understand how gender affirming healthcare practices can contribute to more positive sexual health behaviors among the transgender population.
- It is also important that social workers understand and are trained on best practices for working with transgender individuals, as well as can anticipate the vulnerabilities of this population.
- Gender-affirming healthcare is crucial to the overall health and wellbeing of the transgender population, and research in this area is increasingly relevant due to the recent attacks on the rights of transgender people in the United States.

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