

AMA takes several actions supporting transgender patients

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Acknowledging that individuals' gender and sexual identities do not always fit neatly into binary paradigms, delegates to the 2017 AMA Annual Meeting in Chicago took several actions that support broadening how gender identity is defined within medicine and how transgender patients are treated by society.

The AMA House of Delegates (HOD) did so in an attempt to enhance care for the thousands of Americans who identify as transgender, as well as for many others who do not identify with one particular gender.

Delegates directed the AMA to work with other appropriate organizations to "inform and educate the medical community and the public on the medical spectrum of gender identity." The authors of the adopted resolution wrote that gender is "incompletely understood as a binary selection" because gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and genotypic and phenotypic sex are not always aligned.

The HOD also adopted policy opposing any efforts that would prevent a transgender person from "accessing basic human services and public facilities in line with one's gender identity." Transgender people who live in states with discriminatory policies have "statistically significant increases in mental health and psychiatric diagnoses," according to the resolution delegates adopted.

"Prejudice and discrimination affect transgender individuals in many ways throughout their daily lives, often in the form of physical or verbal abuse or bullying," said Jesse M. Ehrenfeld, MD, MPH, member of the AMA Board of Trustees.

"Laws and policies that restrict the use of public facilities based on biological gender can have immediate and lingering physical consequences, as well as severe mental health repercussions," Dr. Ehrenfeld added. To protect the public health and to promote social equality and safe access to public facilities and services, the American Medical Association is opposed to policies that prevent transgender individuals from accessing basic human services and public facilities in line with their gender identity."

In another action, delegates called upon the AMA to work with the Food and Drug Administration to establish a gender-neutral patient categorization in risk evaluation and mitigation strategies (REMS). The idea is to take the focus away from gender identity and place it on reproductive potential. That is because there are patients who identify as male who may be taking medication that puts them at risk for damage to their biologically female reproductive systems.

Delegates also called for future AMA meetings to take place, whenever possible, only in those counties, cities and states that have nondiscriminatory policies.

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