Learn to deliver high-quality care to your LGBTQIA+ patients

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The history of the Fenway Institute dates back to 1971, when Boston-area residents and politicians opened a community health center and provided aid to local seniors, gays, economically marginalized residents, and students. Today, the Fenway Institute is focused on optimizing health and well-being for sexual and gender minorities.

“The biggest obstacle to health equity for LGBTQIA+ people has been societal stigma and bias reflected in our health policies, systems, institutions and clinical practices,” said Alex Keuroghlian, MD, MPH. He directs education and training programs at the Fenway Institute and is associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

“Clinicians do not receive adequate education in LGBTQIA+ health care during their formative professional training and therefore often have to play catch-up after they start practicing,” Dr. Keuroghlian said.

To aid that “catch-up” process, the AMA collaborated with the Fenway Institute to create CME modules on topics related to care for patients who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and all sexual and gender minorities. The resources are part of the AMA Ed Hub™, an online learning platform that brings together high-quality CME, maintenance of certification, and educational content from trusted sources, all in one place—with activities relevant to you, automated credit tracking and reporting for some states and specialty boards. Learn more about AMA CME accreditation.

“The AMA has unparalleled national reach among clinicians,” Dr. Keuroghlian said, “and the AMA Ed Hub was an ideal platform for collaboration between the National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center at The Fenway Institute and the AMA, to collaboratively enhance culturally-responsive clinical care for LGBTQIA+ communities.”

Providing ‘evidence-informed, high-quality education’

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The new CME modules from the Fenway Institute help physicians and their care teams better understand LGBTQIA+ patients and communities, address and eliminate health inequities, optimize access to cost-effective health care and improve the length and quality of life for LGBTQIA+ patients.

“The overarching goal of the courses is to advance health equity for LGBTQIA+ communities through evidence-informed, high-quality education,” Dr. Keuroghlian said. “Rather than focusing on basic or beginner topics that are increasingly already covered elsewhere, we prioritized emerging yet important topics for which educational resources are still harder to find.”

There are now six Fenway Institute modules on the AMA Ed Hub:

- “Trauma-Informed Care for Trans and Gender Diverse Individuals.”
- “Behavioral Health Care Outside the Binary.”
- “Health Disparities, Stigma and Terminology.”
- “Affirming Care for People with Intersex Traits.”
- “Addressing Social Determinants of Health for Black LGBTQ People.”
- “Eating Disorders and Body Dissatisfaction.”

Dr. Keuroghlian explained that physicians who are passionate about improving care for their LGBTQIA+ patients can make sure they understand foundational concepts and terminology related to sexual orientation, gender identity and sex development. It is also important to understand how stigma and discrimination toward these patients are associated with an array of health inequities.

It is also important for physicians and others in the medical community to mitigate the adverse impact of their own implicit bias on communication, rapport and decision-making with their patients, Dr. Keuroghlian said.

The Fenway Institute is at work on further modules on topics such as gender-affirming medical care, intersex care, health equity for LGBTQIA+ people from historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups, HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis, and treatment for LGBTQIA+ patients with substance-use or mental health disorders.

“LGBTQIA+ health is an exciting and rapidly growing field,” Dr. Keuroghlian said. “Participants in these courses have rated them highly and often express that these learning materials are accessible and relevant for the whole health care team.”