

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

MAY 25, 2023

Marc Zarefsky

Contributing News Writer

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 the education and training division 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.”

Learn how the AMA Foundation is working to shape the future of LGBTQ+ health through its National LGBTQ+ Fellowship Program.

“Evidence-informed, high-quality education”

The 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 10 Fenway Institute modules on the AMA Ed Hub:

- “Affirming Organizational and Human Resource Policies for an LGBTQIA+ Workforce.”
- “LGBTQIA+ Youth and Experiences of Human Trafficking: A Healing-Centered Approach.”
- “Monkeypox: What Frontline Clinicians Need to Know.”
- “Monkeypox Information: Its Symptoms, How It’s Spread, and When to Seek Medical Care.”
- “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 affect their access to care and 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.

“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.”

To improve care for LGBTQ+ patients, the AMA House of Delegates:

- Advocates the creation of targeted efforts to recruit sexual and gender minority students in efforts to increase medical student, resident and physician diversity.
- Encourages the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity data in all surveys as part of standard demographic variables, including but not limited to governmental, AMA, and the Association of American Medical Colleges surveys, given respondent confidentiality and response security can be ensured.
- Working with the Association of American Medical Colleges to disaggregate data of LGBTQ+ individuals in medicine to better understand the representation of the unique experiences within the LGBTQ+ communities and their overlap with other identities.

The AMA Advisory Committee on LGBTQ Issues highlights LGBTQ news and topics related to patients and physicians.