Primary Care for Transgender Individuals: A Review of the Literature reflecting a Canadian Perspective

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The aim of this review was to understand the primary care needs and access to health care services for transgender adults in Canada

-Review used to inform a larger study exploring the delivery and implementation of primary care services to transgender individuals in Ontario

- 13 articles were included in this review

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The Canadian Transgender Population

- 200,000 transgender adults in Canada (Giblon & Bauer, 2017)
- In Ontario, ½ of the transgender population is living full-time in identified gender
- 23% of transgender Ontarians have socially and medically transitioned

(Scheim & Bauer, 2015)

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Primary Care Needs

- Gender Affirming Health Care
  - Access to gender-affirming medical care can improve psychological functioning (Ross et al., 2016)
  - Includes hormone therapy and surgical care
- Health screening, preventive care, risk assessments, and periodic exams
- Mental Health, Social Isolation, HIV

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Access to Primary Care

- 83% of transgender individuals in Ontario have a family physician (Bauer, et al., 2015)
- Transgender females being Indigenous and/or of color had a higher likelihood of not having a primary-care provider
- 72% had to travel to access transgender-specific health care (Heinz and MacFarlane, 2013)
- Each province and territory control access and coverage for care services, medications and surgeries

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Barriers to Care

- Practitioners who is knowledgeable about transgender healthcare (Vermeir et al., 2018)
- Organizational barriers
- Lack of policies to accommodate transgender individuals

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Primary Care is Primary Care

		Case 1: Fee-For-Service	Case 2: Family Health Team	Case 3: Community Health Centre
Team members participating in the study	Physician	1	1	2
	Nurse Practitioner	-	1	2
	Nurse	-	1	2
	Counsellor	-	1	3
	Program Manager	-	1	-
	Community Support Worker	-	-	1
	Executive Director	-	1	1
	Clinical Support Staff	1	1	1
Number of staff participating in the study		2	7	12
Estimated of transgender patients in the practice		140	70	300
Length of time providing transgender primary care		2 years	7-10 years	Unsure

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	Physician	NP *	Nurse *	Counsellor *	Clinical Support Staff	Other *
Administrative duties					√	√
Advocacy	√			√		√
Assessments	√	√	√	√		
Care Coordination				√		√
Chronic Disease Management	√	√				
Counselling		√		√		
Episodic Care	√	√				
Health Promotion			√	√		
Medication Teaching and Administration of injections (hormones, vaccinations)			√			
Order, monitor and follow up on diagnostic testing	√	√				
Patient Education/teaching		√	√	√		
Prescribing Medication	√	√				
Preventative Care	√	√	√			
Referrals	√	√		√		

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Results

- "Primary care is primary care"
- A lack of existing primary care services
- Need for more education/training about transgender healthcare needs
- Care for transgender individuals should be normalized and embedded into primary care services
- Organizational engagement is required to ensure successful implementation
- Interprofessional team meetings can improve care coordination

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Implications for Education

Improvement in practitioners' capacity

- include transgender content in curriculum, continuing education and brief educational interventions (e.g. Learning modules)

Increased opportunities for continuing education and mentorship focused on transgender-specific content is needed

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Implications for Policy

- Development of organizational policies to eliminate healthcare barriers
  - E.g. Gender neutral washrooms, staff training and safe spaces
- Increased provincial and federal funding to improve access to transgender healthcare
- Advocate for policies to improve access to transgender healthcare

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