

## Nursing Education Research Conference 2018 (NERC18)

### Translating the Lived Experience of Transgender Persons to Nursing Curricula

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The lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender (LGBT) population is a vulnerable and underserved health care population. In the United States, approximately 1.4 million adults identify as transgender—double the number reported in 2011 (Flores et al, 2016). The transgender population is at higher risk for many health issues. Depression estimates for the population are 27.8-51.3% (Bockting, Miner, Swinburne, Hamilton & Coleman, 2014; Budge, Adelsen & Howard, 2013; Nuttbrock et al., 2014) with suicide attempts for transgender veterans reported as 4085-5128/100,000 (Blosnich, et al., 2013). Additionally, 41.9% report experiencing non-suicidal self-injury (Dickey, Reisner & Juntunen, 2015). Several studies have discovered relationships between these mental health concerns and a history of violent experiences, exposure to transphobia, and denial of health care (Bockting et al, 2013; McCarty, Fisher, Irwin, Coleman & Pelster, 2014; Nuttbrock et al., 2014).

The United States Department of Health and Human Services stated that one of the goals of its Healthy People 2020 initiative was to “improve the health, safety, and well-being of LGBT individuals” (2014, para 1). Evidence suggests that gender-nonconforming individuals are becoming more visible in local primary care settings in both rural and urban environments. Nurses have challenging roles in transforming evidenced-based care and intervention into practice to provide culturally sensitive patient care for transgender people. Emerging evidence suggests that content related to LGB and transgender health disparities in the nursing curriculum is suboptimal (Lim, Brown & Jones, 2013).

Recent social gains made by LGB and transgender communities indicate a need for a national LGBT health care agenda and illustrate the need for nurses to address health parity for LGB and transgender individuals. Halloran (2015) states that few practitioners have received formal education on the evolving needs of transgender patients. Undeniably, the nursing profession has consistently provided care for vulnerable diverse populations. However, like other health care providers, nursing is influenced by sociopolitical values and society's expectations for health care delivery systems. This may result in gaps in practicing nurses' knowledge and skills, which may, in turn, adversely affect LGB and transgender patients' health care (Carabez et al., 2015; Chinn, 2013; Sirota, 2013).

Makadon, Goldhammer, and Davis (2015), assert that “there is no question that the actions and inactions of health professionals have had a significant effect on the health of LGBT people” (p. 6). Chinn (2013)—a pioneer nurse educator and LGBT advocate—stated that LGBT content has been missing from the nursing curricula for too long, and has encouraged nursing faculty to integrate LGBT issues into their curricula. Chinn (2013) identified four common barriers faculty experience related to the integration of LGBT-related curriculum content: sexual identity, lack of sufficient time, issues regarding religious beliefs, and fear of negative student evaluations. Levesque (2015) asserted that the increasing visibility of transgender students in academia requires nurse educators to build a culturally congruent curriculum wherein the next generation of nurses can feel safe and free from harm and prejudices, including the threat of bullying (Zou, Andersen, & Blosnich, 2016).

Understanding the transgender experience as these individuals transition to an appropriate gender expression will have a positive impact on nursing knowledge and professional collaborative nursing practice. Although research related to this vulnerable population has been conducted, little is known about the transition experience of transgender people. A phenomenological study was conducted to explore the lived experience of 11 individuals who have undergone gender transitions. The secondary aims of the study were to better address the health disparities of transgender individuals and guide faculty in implementing curricula to meet health disparities of transgender individuals.

After data analysis from in-depth interviews was completed, four major themes emerged and were threaded through the participants' experiences: a) it's gravity; b) shedding your skin; c) navigating the way; and d) a turning point. Participants shared the unrelenting recognition of their biological gender not matching their emotional gender. Most participants experienced a turning point in their gender identification journey. Many experienced thoughts of suicide and recurring depression before their gender transitions. Locating high quality healthcare resources was a common theme. They identified word of mouth and transgender groups as their primary sources of information. Participants shared their desire to make meaning from their experience in order to help and advocate for others. Understanding these commonalities of the lived experience of transgendered people is a fundamental objective for healthcare providers and educators so that quality care is given to improve patient outcomes in this vulnerable population.

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**Title:**

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### **Abstract Summary:**

The number of transgendered people in the United States has increased 100% over the last six years. Findings from a phenomenological study reveal the transgender experience. Nurse educators, knowledgeable about this population, its experience, and health disparities can educate nursing students and facilitate improved care for this vulnerable group.

### **Content Outline:**

#### I. Introduction to the Transgender Population

A. Healthy People 2020 has identified the lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender (LBGT) population as a vulnerable and underserved patient population. Approximately 1.4 million adults identify as transgender. This number is rising according to most recent statistics (Flores, 2016).

B. Nurses are challenged to transform evidence-based care into practice to provide culturally sensitive care that addresses unique health needs for transgender people.

C. Evidence suggests that gender-nonconforming individuals are becoming more visible in local primary care settings in both rural and urban environments.

D. The purpose of the presentation is to describe the experience of and common health issues of transgender individuals and guide faculty in implementing curricula examining health disparities of transgender individuals. This knowledge is vital to nurses, no matter their scope of practice.

## II. Description of Health Needs of the Transgender Population

A. One of Healthy People 2020 goals is to “improve the health, safety, and well-being of LGBT individuals”.

1. The transgender population is at high risk for many health issues.

a) Depression

b) Suicide attempts

c) Self-injury

d) Violence

2. Gender nonconforming patients are becoming more visible in society and local primary care settings in rural and urban environments.

a) Many healthcare providers and primary care providers in rural and urban environments lack the knowledge to provide sufficient care to gender nonconforming patients.

B. Need for national LGBT health care agenda to address health parity.

1. Gaps in knowledge in caring for transgender patients.

2. Barriers to the integration of LGBT-related curriculum.

3. LGBT care and transgender health disparities content in nursing curriculum is suboptimal

C. Healthcare providers should understand the transgender experience.

1. Research

a) Phenomenological study.

b) Emergence of themes through research.

2. Translation of Research to Practice

- a) Documented lived experiences of transgender individuals improve patient outcomes
- b) Documented lived experiences of transgender individuals improve provider knowledge and understanding.

### III. Conclusion

A. Nurse Educators must prepare nurses in all scopes of practice to be advocates for LGBT patients when providing care.

B. Nursing curricula should include content to provide awareness of the transgender experience, specific health needs of this population, disparities and facilitate cultural sensitive competent care.

First Primary Presenting Author

#### ***Primary Presenting Author***

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**Professional Experience:** August 2014 - Present Assistant Professor Troy University School of Nursing  
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**Author Summary:** Holly Carter is an Assistant Professor of Nursing at Troy University School of Nursing. Her teaching responsibilities are within the undergraduate BSN program. Ms. Carter is a certified family nurse practitioner and registered nurse. She is also a current PhD student.

Second Secondary Presenting Author

#### ***Corresponding Secondary Presenting Author***

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**Professional Experience:** Dr. Lennen has been a registered nurse for 34 years and has 25 years of experience teaching in ASN, BSN, and graduate nursing programs. 1992-present: Nurse educator in ASN, BSN, and graduate nursing programs. 2012: PhD completion; Topic "Factors influencing sexual behavior among men who have sex with men" 2016-17: Conducted literature review and two research studies on transgender persons.

**Author Summary:** Dr. Lennen has 25 years of teaching experience and has participated in curriculum development for ASN, BSN, and graduate nursing programs. She has conducted qualitative and quantitative research among men who have sex with men and transgender populations.

Third Author

Stephanie L. Lewis, PhD, RN, CNE  
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**Professional Experience:** 1988-2017: 29 years nursing experience 2003-present: Nurse educator in BSN and graduate programs 2015-present: Lead faculty teaching a doctoral level course on vulnerable populations and health disparities 2016-17: Designed and conducted two research studies about transgender people.

**Author Summary:** Dr. Lewis has successfully published four manuscripts and regularly presents ongoing research and findings at regional and national nursing conferences. Currently, Dr. Lewis is involved in writing a research for one study that was just completed and another study that is in the intervention phase.

Fourth Author

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**Professional Experience:** 1995-present: Registered Nurse 2001-present: Family Nurse Practitioner 2007-present: Nurse Educator in undergraduate and graduate programs 2016-17: Designed, conducted, and analyzed two research studies about transgender individuals

**Author Summary:** Dr. Jones has been a nurse for over 22 years and a practicing family nurse practitioner for 16 years. Dr. Jones also has 10 years of experience as a nurse educator teaching in undergraduate and graduate nursing programs. Dr. Jones has published five manuscripts and has presented at national conferences. She is currently completing a case study on a transgender individual.

Fifth Author

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**Professional Experience:** NP experience in family health over 15 years RN over 20 years worked in a variety of areas including Internal medicine, long term care, Hospice and Emergency Medicine.

**Author Summary:** Dr. Mason has been a nurse practitioner for over 15 years. She started working for Troy University as a faculty member in their graduate programs in 2014. She enjoys teaching family nurse practitioner students as they progress through graduate school.

Sixth Author

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**Professional Experience:** I serve as the DNP program coordinator and have taught graduate level biostatistics for 13 years. I co-authored numerous publications in which I served in the role as evaluator/data analysis contributor. I am very proficient in the use of SPSS in data analysis and experienced in project and evaluation methodologies.

**Author Summary:** Dr. Amy Y. Spurlock is a professor and DNP Program Coordinator in the School of Nursing with academic concentrations of evaluation methods/research methodology, and biostatistics. She has 23 years of teaching experience including 13 years in graduate programs. She has 20 + scholarly publications and over 25 international, national and regional scholarly presentations. She received a Published Research Award in 2012 from the Pediatric Nutrition Practice Group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Seventh Author

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**Professional Experience:** 1994-present: Nurse Educator in BSN, MSN, and doctoral nursing programs  
1995-present: Advanced Practice Psychiatric Nurse  
1994-present: Conducted various research projects on vulnerable populations  
2016-17: Participated in data analysis for a study about transgender individuals.

**Author Summary:** Eula W. Pines, PhD, DNP, PMHCNS-BC has taught in the BSN, MSN, and Doctoral nursing programs over 23 years. Dr. Pines has maintained her ANCC certified Advanced Practice Psychiatric Nurse (since 1995). She maintains clinical practice serving vulnerable populations in the roles of consultant, advocate, and direct care provider. Dr. Pines has led research initiatives and published peer-reviewed articles focusing on assessment and prevention of bullying in nursing students and novice nurses.