



भारत सरकार
स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय
स्वास्थ्य सेवा महानिदेशालय
Government of India
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Directorate General of Health Services

प्रो.(डॉ.) अतुल गोयल
Prof. (Dr.) Atul Goel
MD (Med.)

स्वास्थ्य सेवा महानिदेशक
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF HEALTH SERVICES

No. C.18018/05/2024/SAS-III
21st August 2024

Subject: Ensuring the health care access and reducing discrimination towards LGBTQ+ community.

Dear *Colleagues,*

I wish to draw your attention towards an important matter; 'rights of LGBTQ+ community'. The LGBTQ+ community is an important part of society. They face challenges of discrimination in various spheres of life. It is essential that their rights be guarded through a non-discriminatory environment.

Evidence from literature suggests that LGBTQ+ individuals are at an increased risk for some health problems such as cancers (anal, breast, cervical), Sexually Transmitted Infections, Cardiovascular-disease and psychological issues (Depression, Anxiety, Substance use and attempted suicides). Associated stigma and discriminatory attitude also cause barriers in optimal access to healthcare services.

Therefore, it is proposed that following measures be adopted to ensure rights of LGBTQ+ community-

1. **Awareness Activities** – Planning of awareness activities at all levels of healthcare and in community towards understanding the psycho-social aspects of LGBTQ+ and their problems thereof.
2. **Prohibiting Sex-Conversion Therapy** – Ensuring that forced surgeries /procedures/ and/or treatment aimed to change gender identity or sexual orientation are not performed/done.
3. **Availability of Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)** – That SRS be made available at designated Government and/or Govt. Aided Autonomous Medical Institutions.
4. **Standard Operating Procedures** – Institutions designated as SRS Centres should have and follow Standard Operating Procedures for Sex-Reassignment-Surgeries. The same are being prepared by the MOHFW.
5. **Changes in Curricula** – Inclusion of health issues related to LGBTQ+ in the curricula of various medical, nursing, and paramedical courses. This will sensitise and train future health professionals towards a non-discriminatory attitude and specific health needs of the community. The National Medical commission has already taken some steps in this direction, these need to be implemented across the institutions.

...2/-

6. **Availability of Tele consultation** – Strengthening availability of Tele consultation services for the community. TELE MANAS is a very useful tool to provide mental health services to the LGBTQ+ community, as it promotes complete confidentiality. Staff providing these services should be trained towards specific needs of the community.
7. **Sensitising and training various levels of staff** – Staff needs to be informed about terminologies and health care needs related to the community. They should have a non-discriminatory attitude towards the community.

I urge you to implement these measures and look forward to your positive response. With our combined efforts, I am confident that we will be able to strengthen our healthcare services towards the needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

Warm personal regards,

Encl.: Annexure- Detailed note.

Yours sincerely,



(Atul Goel)

To

1. Additional Chief Secretary/Secretary (Health) of all States/UTs.
2. Director, Medical Education of all States/UTs
3. Chairman, National Medical Commission, New Delhi
4. President, Indian Nursing Council
5. President, Dental Council of India
6. Director/Executive Directors of all AIIMS
7. Director, LHMC and Associated hospitals, New Delhi.
8. Medical Superintendent, ABVIMS & RML Hospital, New Delhi.
9. Medical Superintendent, VMMC and Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi.

ANNEXURE

The LGBTQ+ populations face multiple challenges related to healthcare.

1. Challenges related to Health issues

- a. Increased risk of obesity
- b. Increased risk of Sexually transmitted infections
- c. Increased Risk of cancers (anal, breast, cervical, colorectal, endometrial, lung, and prostate)
- d. Increased Risk of Cardiovascular Disease

2. Challenges related to Mental Health

- a. High rates of Psychological/Psychiatric disturbances such as Depression, Anxiety, Substance use, Eating Disorders, Body image issues.
- b. Increased risk of attempted suicide

3. Challenges related to healthcare access

- a. Limited knowledge among Health Care Professionals
- b. Discriminatory Attitude towards these communities among Health Professionals
- c. Lack of confidentiality and privacy
- d. Stigma attached to this community

4. Challenges related to Treatment, Surgery/Procedures

- a. In the past, homosexuality was considered a disease. People often seek treatment for their LGBTQIA+ child especially from a Psychiatrist.
- b. Some persons may be subjected to hormonal treatment/procedures/ psychiatric treatment against their will.
- c. Sexual Reassignment Surgery is being done in the country but availability is limited and there are no uniform guidelines in place suited to socio-cultural needs of our country.

With these challenges in mind, some remedial measures are suggested-

1. Improving healthcare access

- a. Hospitals should have easily accessible services for various health issues of LGBTQ+ and also for SRS.
- b. Training sessions should be planned and held to sensitize receptionist & support staff towards issues of LGBTQ+ and the various terminologies.
- c. The medical evaluation should be done ensuring privacy and confidentiality.
- d. Appropriate pronouns should be used to address this population.
- e. Waiting areas should have non-discriminatory policy displayed.
- f. Staff should acquaint themselves with Gender Affirmative care guidelines.

....2/-

2. **Enhancing mental health services**

- a. Mental health services should be provided with full privacy and ensuring confidentiality.
- b. Mental Health Professionals should generate awareness on this not being any disease and discourage any kind of psychological treatment aimed at changing sexual orientation.
- c. TELE MANAS can be a very useful tool to provide initial mental health services to this population without any perceived stigma. The staff at TELE MANAS cells should be trained to handle the calls from persons from LGBTQ+ community
