

# GENDER-AFFIRMING MEDICAL CARE

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CPSM acknowledges the current political atmosphere concerning 2SLGBTQ+ communities. We recognize that issues of sexuality and gender are complex and not everyone will yet be familiar with various terms. CPSM expects that all registrants provide respectful care to all patients regarding their sexuality and gender.

## An Introduction to Sexuality and Gender

An inclusive approach starts with understanding terminology. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the 2SLGBTQ acronym, and Figure 1 is a playful yet illustrative educational tool to assist a deeper understanding of sexuality and gender.

### Sexuality

Physicians should view sexuality as a combination of both romantic and sexual attractions. These attractions are based on continuums, meaning a patient may be attracted to women/females/femininity, men/males/masculinity, both, or neither.

### Gender

Gender is not just the genitalia seen at birth. Instead, we can look at gender as a combination of identity and expression. Gender identity is how you perceive, express, and value your gender- *How you think of yourself*. Gender expression is how you perform your gender identity which relates to your characters, behaviours, and appearance- *What you show to the world*. Gender is constructed with varying levels of masculinity and femininity, which are not mutually exclusive. This allows for gender to have a much broader definition and creates an environment where a patient may express their gender in a more fluid manner.

## Barriers Faced by the 2SLGBTQ Community

**Attitudinal Barriers** When a person or group thinks or acts on false assumptions

*Example* Homophobia, heterosexism, heterocentrism, and racism

**Technological Barriers** Limited access to relevant and useful hardware and software

*Example* Electronic Health Records without intuitive option to differential gender and sex assigned at birth

**Systemic Barriers** The result of practices, policies and procedures that result in unequal access or blatant exclusion, of a person or community.

*Example* Lack of provider skill or knowledge, access limitations, gaps in language and literacy

**Physical Barriers** Structural obstacles within our environment

*Example* Female OR male bathrooms, gendered health clinics

## Why is this so important?

The compounded effect of the above barriers results in an increase in negative health outcomes including; anxiety, depression, substance use disorders, and chronic health conditions. The risk of suicide is alarming, as a recent Canadian study demonstrated that transgender youth are five times more likely to have suicidal ideation and are nearly eight times more at risk of a suicide attempt when compared to their cisgender heterosexual peers. <sup>(4)</sup>

## What is Gender Affirming Care?

Gender-affirming care is a term used by healthcare providers who treat patients whose gender identity is not congruent with their sex assigned at birth. The goal for gender-affirming care is gender affirmation; where a person can thrive as their authentic self. The pursuit of gender affirmation frequently requires a combination of medical, psychological, and legal steps. In medicine, we often focus on the patient pursuing treatment to assist in developing secondary sexual characteristics that are reflective of their gender identity. While within the scope of primary care, not all providers will feel they have the knowledge to provide direct treatment. In these circumstances, it is important to obtain referrals when necessary and support patients in their treatment goals.

What can we do?

## 1. Create a welcoming environment

**Materials:** Inclusive posters, stickers, reading material

**Language:** Inclusive and affirming language by all staff members

**Forms:** Include a space for **both legal name and preferred name.**

Include a space for **both gender and sex.**

Include a space for **pronouns.**

## 2. Make it a part of your routine

**Introductions:** Avoid assumed gender titles (ex: Sir, Miss, Mr, Ma'am).

**Ask:** Take a moment to ask every patient their preferred name and pronouns.

## 3. Be an effective ally

Being an ally requires action, being someone who is willing to provide visible and consistent support to the 2SLGBTQ community.

## 4. Apologize if you make a mistake

We all make mistakes. Be sure to acknowledge what went wrong, apologize, and move on. Saying "I'm sorry" can go a long way when building a therapeutic relationship.

## 5. Provide gender affirming care

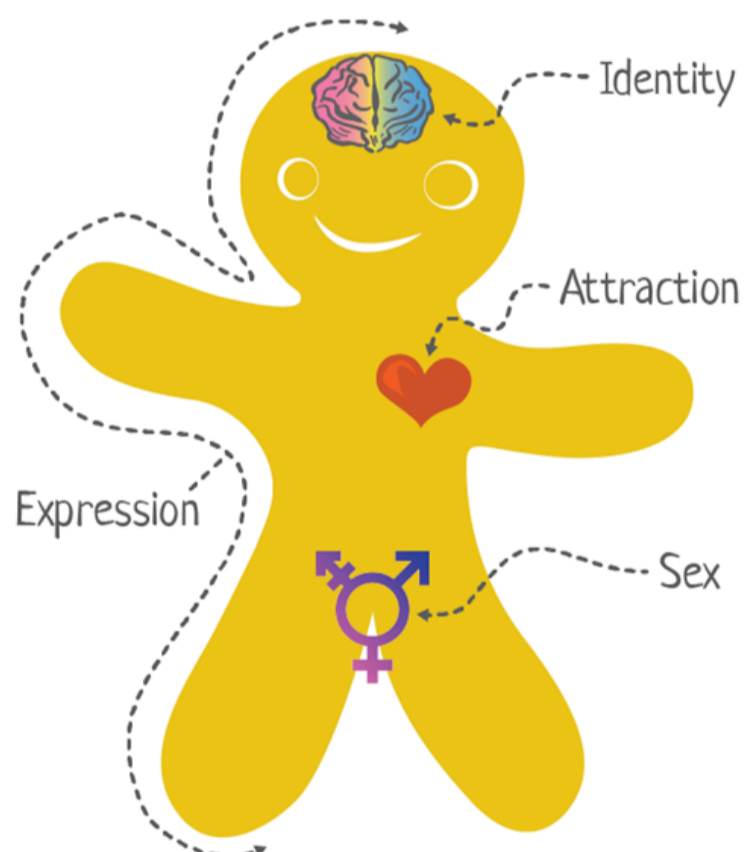
- Primary care providers are well positioned to support patients longitudinally through a gender transition.
- Gender affirming hormone therapy can be safely initiated and monitored in the primary care setting. Providing this care within primary care reduces systemic barriers for gender diverse patients. Current wait times for specialty care are lengthy and may contribute to negative health outcomes.
- Many resources exist to support prescribing in the primary care setting:
- Trans Health primary care guide (interactive format) based on Sherbourne Health Centre: Guidelines for Gender affirming primary care: <https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/TransHealthGuide/>
- Transcare BC Primary Care Toolkit: <http://www.phsa.ca/transcarebc/Documents/HealthProf/Primary-Care-Toolkit.pdf>
- Soon to launch: Clinic Education sessions on gender diversity and gender affirming hormone prescribing- in development, anticipated launch Spring 2024 and run quarterly.

Need help?			
Provider	Location	Phone	Fax
Klinik Trans Health Program (16 years old+) <i>Self or physician referral</i>	167 Sherbrook St. Winnipeg	204-786-4003	204-784-7013
Brandon Trans Health Clinic (16 years old+) Dr. Treloar <i>Self or physician referral</i>	800 Rosser Ave. Brandon	204-578-2500	204-578-2824
GDAAY (HSC) (under 16 years old) <i>Physician referral only</i>	685 William Ave.	204-787-2490	204-787-1655
Dr. Reitmeier <i>Physician or NP referral</i>	Portage la Prairie		204-400-5128

Table 1: Breaking Down the Acronym

2S	Two Spirited	A term to describe the ancestral teachings of First Nations people who embodied and/or transcend the spirits of male and female
L	Lesbian	A person who identifies as female who is attracted to members of the same gender
G	Gay	A person who identifies as male who is attracted to members of the same gender
B	Bisexual	A person who is attracted to some members of more than one sex/gender
T	Transgender	Often used to describe those whose gender identity is not congruent with the sex assigned at birth
Q	Queer	Umbrella term for anyone who identifies within or outside the 2SLGBTQ community and may prefer an alternative identifier

## The Genderbread Person v4 by its pronounced METROsexual.com



⊖ means a lack of what's on the right side

Gender Identity

⊖ → Woman-ness  
 ⊖ → Man-ness

Gender Expression

⊖ → Femininity  
 ⊖ → Masculinity

Anatomical Sex

⊖ → Female-ness  
 ⊖ → Male-ness

Identity ≠ Expression ≠ Sex  
 Gender ≠ Sexual Orientation

Sex Assigned At Birth  
 □ Female □ Intersex □ Male

Sexually Attracted to... and/or (a/o)

⊖ → Women a/o Feminine a/o Female People  
 ⊖ → Men a/o Masculine a/o Male People

Romantically Attracted to...

⊖ → Women a/o Feminine a/o Female People  
 ⊖ → Men a/o Masculine a/o Male People