Clinical Depression: A Health Disparity Among LGBT In Comparison to the General Population in Massachusetts

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What is a Health Disparity?

A health disparity is the difference in the incidence, prevalence, mortality, and burden of disease and other adverse health conditions that exist among specific population groups when compared in contrast to the general population.

Disparities can stem from:
- Unequal distribution of social, political, economic, and environmental resources
Clinical Depression is a mood disorder causing persistent sadness.

Can Lead To:

- Loss of Hope
- High Anxiety and Restlessness
- Extreme Mood Changes
- Attempts or Completion of Suicide
Can People Control It?

- No, it has been proven there is a physical change in those with clinical depression brain chemistry, resulting in an imbalance of neurotransmitters.

- Through MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) testing, it is shown that areas of the brain controlling appetite, sleep, and behavior are remarkably different between those with clinical depression and those without it.
Compared to the general population, LGBT display a disparity of clinical depression within Massachusetts.

LGBT are more prone to poorer health than heterosexuals/straight in factors such as:
  - self reported health
  - sexual assault victimization
  - substance abuse
Population of 2014

Estimated Total Population within Mass. = 6,745,000

Estimated LGBT Population within Mass. = 230,768

3.42%  = Population in Mass. that identify as LGBT
Health Status

97.1% of adults identified themselves as heterosexual or straight, while 1.9% self-identified as gay, lesbian or homosexual, and 1.0% as bisexual in Mass.
Research suggests that LGBT individuals face health disparities linked to discrimination, societal stigma, and denial of their civil and human rights.
LGBT are more likely to experience discrimination throughout their lives than the general population.

Associated with:
- High Rates of Psychiatric Disorders
- Substance Abuse
- Suicide
Societal Stigma

- Personal, family, and social acceptance of sexual orientation and gender identity affects the mental health and personal safety of LGBT individuals.
  - Often times, LGBT are homeless because they cannot be accepted by family and by society.
  - The only safe places for LGBT to meet are at bars and clubs.
Clinical Depression is often related to oppression and discrimination.

- **Legal** discrimination: access to health insurance, employment, housing, marriage, adoption, and retirement
- **Violence**: Lack of enforcement of anti-bullying laws in school to protect LGBT students, frequent victimization of LGBT often disregarded and overlooked
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay or Lesbian</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
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</tbody>
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(Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2009)
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**Table 9: Mental Health – Number of Days in Past Month Depressed and Anxious**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Number of Days Depressed</th>
<th>Number of Days Anxious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>8.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gay or Lesbian</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>7.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>10.84</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transgender Status</th>
<th>Number of Days Depressed</th>
<th>Number of Days Anxious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>11.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>8.31</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Efforts to Improve LGBT Health

### How We Can Help
- Implementing anti-bullying policies in schools
- Reforms in receiving access to equal medical benefits
- Providing supportive social services to reduce suicide and homelessness risk among youth

### Treatment
- Talk Therapy is an effective measure to help
- Antidepressants: SSRI’s and SNRI’s
- Electroconvulsive Therapy
- Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation
On Our Way

Laws

- In 1989, Massachusetts became the 2nd state to pass an antidiscrimination law to prohibit sexual orientation discrimination to interfere with employment, housing, credit and services.
- In November of 2011, a legislative enacted law, *An Act Relative to Gender Identity*, was signed by the governor and went into effect on July 12, 2012. It prohibited discrimination against transgenders.

Policies in schools

- In Massachusetts, LGBT students have the right to attend school safely, safely express your point of view, form a GSA, wear clothes that fit your gender identity, be called by your chosen name and attend the bathroom/locker room of your choice.
- These rights are established by state and federal laws through all Mass. public schools.
In Conclusion

- According to statistics, the LGBT population are more prone to clinical depression and mental health issues in comparison to the general population.

- Research suggests that discrimination and oppression within their environment puts the LGBT population at higher risk of clinical depression.
KEEP CALM AND BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE
Questions?