

“ONCE IT STARTED, IT JUST BECAME SO CLEAR THERE WAS A HUGE DEMAND”: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES ON DELIVERING EFFECTIVE SEXUAL HEALTHCARE TO TRANSGENDER AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE ENGAGING IN AUSTRALIA

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Background:

Transgender and gender diverse (‘trans’) people in Australia bear a disproportionate burden of sexually transmissible infections and face unique needs in the context of sexual healthcare. Thus, defining the conditions of ‘quality’ sexual healthcare for this population is essential.

Methods:

This study draws upon 13 in-depth interviews conducted between November 2024 to February 2025 with healthcare professionals involved in delivering sexual healthcare for trans people in Australia. A deductive thematic analysis was applied to understand the current context in which care is occurring and define best practices for effective sexual healthcare delivery for trans people.

Results:

Our analysis organised three spheres of concentric influence defining effective sexual healthcare for trans populations: patient-provider, clinical, and sociopolitical. Conditions of the patient-provider level included knowledgeable care, respectful engagement, building trust, and affirming care, while conditions of the clinical context included a welcoming atmosphere, community consultation, supportive staff, and sustainability and capacity. At the sociopolitical level, participants recognised the following as directly and indirectly influencing effective sexual healthcare for trans people: anti-trans media discourse, political discrimination, financial investment, and intersectional oppression. Most participants pointed to funding and governing bodies as shouldering significant responsibility for facilitating the delivery of quality sexual healthcare to trans people, which typically includes gender-affirming care. One participant succinctly captured this finding, “I think it’s important that gender-affirming care is provided in public sexual health clinics in Australia, but it needs to be properly resourced and properly funded.”

Conclusion:

Results define the significance of multilevel factors that can facilitate or impede effective sexual healthcare for trans populations. While attention to interpersonal dimensions and clinical context are important, large-scale interventions to advance trans rights at the sociopolitical level are likely to have the greatest positive impact on sexual healthcare for trans people in Australia.

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