

INVESTIGATING SEXUAL ABUSE AND PRIMARY CARE USAGE AMONG LGBTIQA+ POPULATIONS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Background:

Research suggests that compared to non-LGBTIQA+ individuals, members of LGBTIQA+ populations seek help for IPV, including sexual abuse, from primary care providers at lower rates. When they do seek assistance, their experiences may sometimes be dismissed due to cisgendered and heteronormative systems that exclude them. Safer Options is a research project at Curtin University seeking to strengthen the capacity of primary care providers in Western Australia (WA) to deliver accessible primary care services to LGBTIQA+ individuals experiencing IPV.

Methods:

The research employs mixed methods and multiple research activities including a state-wide survey completed by 526 West Australian LGBTIQA+ individuals. The survey examined experiences and beliefs of IPV, experiences when accessing primary care services, and needs when seeking support for IPV.

Results:

Sexual abuse was experienced by 39% of respondents. Additionally, 48% of participants identified sexual abuse and the use of drugs/alcohol for coercive purposes as significant issues within LGBTIQA+ populations. Whilst 92% felt confident establishing consent, 29% were unable to correctly distinguish between unhealthy and abusive behaviours. Over half preferred seeking support from sexual assault services, and for primary care services to be explicitly LGBTIQA+ inclusive. A variety of suggestions for inclusive and affirming practice were identified. Research findings were used to inform development resource materials, including a website, brochures, and posters. These support materials are intended to educate and raise awareness about IPV in LGBTIQA+ contexts and available to access at www.saferoptions.org.au.

Conclusion:

IPV and sexual abuse as experienced by LGBTIQA+ individuals is a significant public health concern. Sexual abuse is a prevalent type of IPV experienced by LGBTIQA+ individuals and primary care services must be well-equipped to support. Additionally, services should commit to education and awareness raising among LGBTIQA+ individuals to better recognise IPV and seek support from inclusive services.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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