

Breaking Barriers for Transgender Youth

March 18, 2020

In a recently released article in *Pediatrics*, Fontenot et al provides us with new insights into several barriers that often limit access to care for transgender youth, specifically focusing on their perceptions of HIV risk and use of HIV preventative services ([10.1542/peds.2019-2204](#)).

Catherine Spaulding, MD, Mt. Sinai Urgent Care, Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, New York, NY

Content License: FreeView

Article type: [Pediatrics Blog](#)



In a recently released article in *Pediatrics*, Fontenot et al provides us with new insights into several barriers that often limit access to care for transgender youth, specifically focusing on their perceptions of HIV risk and use of HIV preventative services ([10.1542/peds.2019-2204](#)). Transgender patients are among the highest at risk for HIV infection. While public awareness of HIV risk and HIV prevention services has grown substantially in the last decade, the rate of new HIV diagnoses among transgender

patients remained 3 times the national average in 2017¹. As Fontenot et al explain, a better understanding of how transgender youth experience the healthcare system when accessing HIV preventative services may help us better address the needs of this vulnerable population.

For this study, Fontenot et al hosted two online focus groups with transgender youth, ages 13 to 24. What emerged were several common themes that have also been well documented in adult transgender populations when discussing barriers to care: the need for improved cultural awareness to prevent discrimination of transgender youth in all settings, expanded definitions of what sexual activity encompasses, promotion of sexual health education in schools that better represents and includes all gender identities, as well as increased education on transgender medicine for all health care providers.

As healthcare professionals, I believe we have been a driving force to help push forward the rights and needs of these individuals for many years. Yet this article served as a reminder that there is much more to be done. We must continue to work within our institutions to ensure that transgender medicine is a component of medical education, no matter what specialty or field. We must encourage our clinics and hospitals to ensure the language we use is gender affirming and promotes acceptance and awareness of all gender identities and sexual orientation. Finally, we must also engage with our community leaders to encourage schools to develop sexual education curriculum that better represents the needs of transgender youth.

Reference

1. "Transgender People." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 12 Nov. 2019, www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/gender/transgender/index.html.

- [Considerations for Addressing Low HIV Testing Rates Among Adolescent Men Who Have Sex With Men](#)
- [Factors Associated With HIV Testing in Teenage Men Who Have Sex With Men](#)
- [A Treatment-Decision Score for HIV-Infected Children With Suspected Tuberculosis](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)

Copyright © 2020 American Academy of Pediatrics