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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Barriers in the social and healthcare assistance for transgender persons: A systematic review of qualitative studies[☆]

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KEYWORDS

Culturally competent care;
Health service accessibility;
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Review

Abstract

Aim: To explore the barriers to requesting social and healthcare assistance perceived by transgender persons and professionals involved in the assistance.

Method: A meta-study, qualitative systematic review, of studies published in English or Spanish, exploring the barriers, perceived by transgender persons and social and healthcare professionals, that transgender persons have when they seek social and healthcare assistance was carried out in the following databases Medline (PubMed), Scopus, Web of Science, Spanish National Research Council, CUIDEN, ProQuest, PsycINFO and CINAHL.

Results: Two thousand two hundred and sixty-one articles were found in the databases searched. Seven articles met all inclusion criteria and were included in this review. The professionals highlight the uncertainty when treating transgender persons and their lack of training. Transgender persons highlight the lack of information and the sense of helplessness it creates. Perceptions of transphobia, the fragmentation of services, administrative barriers, the lack of cultural sensitivity and professional training are also considered barriers to assistance.

Discussion: The findings of this study provide key information for the design of plans and programmes to improve the quality of social and health care for transgender persons.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Atención de
Enfermería;
Accesibilidad a los
servicios de salud;
Asistencia sanitaria
culturalmente
competente;
Personas transgénero;
Revisión

Barreras en la asistencia sociosanitaria en personas transexuales: revisión sistemática de estudios cualitativos

Resumen

Objetivo: Explorar las barreras para solicitar asistencia sociosanitaria percibidas por personas transexuales y por profesionales que intervienen en la asistencia.

Método: Se realizó un metaestudio tipo revisión sistemática cualitativa de artículos publicados en inglés o en castellano en las bases de datos Medline (PubMed), Scopus, Web of Science, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, CUIDEN, ProQuest, PsycINFO y CINHALL, que indagaran en las barreras de las personas transexuales para solicitar atención sociosanitaria percibidas por personas transexuales y profesionales sociales y sanitarios.

Resultados: Tras la búsqueda en las bases de datos analizadas se encontraron 2.261 artículos, de los cuales 7 cumplieron los criterios de inclusión. Los profesionales destacan su incertidumbre a la hora de atender a personas transexuales, así como la falta de formación. Las personas transexuales destacan la falta de información que les genera sentimientos de impotencia. Además, la percepción de transfobia, la fragmentación de los servicios, las barreras administrativas y la falta de sensibilidad cultural y conocimientos de los profesionales son consideradas barreras para la atención.

Discusión: Los resultados encontrados aportan una información clave para el diseño de planes y programas dirigidos a mejorar la calidad de la asistencia en este colectivo.

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What is known?

Transgender people experience inequality in health-care. Holistic care focusing on their particular needs is a desired goal.

What does this paper contribute?

Barriers to assistance for transgender people exist on an individual, organisational, community and political level. This meta-study detects key shortcomings and elements which need to be incorporated into the ongoing training programmes of professionals, healthcare policies and the care plans aimed at transgender people.

Introduction

Gender identities which differ from the inherited male-female binomial model are increasingly more accepted in our society and are recognised under the title of “sexual minorities” and the collective of lesbians, gays, bisexuals transgender people and queers (LGBTQ).^{1–8} As a result, policies have gradually been changed so as to represent all sexual collectives on a community level, but equality remains elusive since previous studies have demonstrated that discriminations continue to exist in several aspects of life for the people of the LGBTQ^{1,3–17} collective.

Within this LGBTQ collective, transgender people are the ones who experience the highest level of discrimination.¹² The term “transgender” refers to those people who have in some way altered the gender they were born into, either through hormonal, surgical or other types of treatments.^{4,6,8,15,16} At other times this term is considered to be an “umbrella” concept which covers diverse gender identifies, including those people who pursue social transition, such as name change or the search for a nickname, those who carry out hormonal or surgical transitions or those who simply wish to be included in a different category from the binary gender as people who are not at ease with their gender.^{6,15}

Transgender people do not usually develop in keeping with society’s expectations of them.⁸ As a result, as confirmed by previous studies, on many occasions transgender people may be the object of discrimination throughout their lives,^{8,9,16} including child abuse,¹¹ violence from a partner,^{8,11,12} discriminations at work^{5,8,12,16} and even inequalities in social and health assistance.^{1,3,5,7,8,14,16} This discrimination is usually the result of the process by which stigmatised groups are rejected and disrespected through the exercise of social, cultural, economic and political powers.¹⁸ Gender stigma has been defined as the process of creating stereotypes and rejection as a form of social control.^{15,17} These 2 components extended in the transsexual collective have been highlighted as the main causes of inequality in health.¹⁶ To these factors has been added the heterosexism which is present in certain institutions, forming another barrier of access to services.¹

Previous studies found that there was a higher propensity of mental illness, and in particular low self-esteem, depression and risk of suicide^{2,6,12,16} in transgender people, mainly due to the discrimination they suffer throughout their lives.

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