

## Primary Care – Sexually Concerned Patient: What You Need to Know

### Whiteboard Animation Transcript

with Jesse Ehrenfeld, MD, MPH

Sexual concerns are common among adolescents and young adults (AYA). Especially those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender – LGBT. There are three essential things to keep in mind when caring for LGBT patients and discussing what can be a rather sensitive topic!

First, you should always interview sexually active patients using open-ended, non-judgemental questions. Since you cannot determine if a patient is sexually active without asking them – you have to ask these questions during your patient interview. It's really impossible to tell which of your patients are sexually active and which are not, unless you ask. But you must ask in a way that creates a safe place for the patient to discuss their practices and activities with you. You might open a conversation by stating, "I am going to ask you a few questions about your sexual health and sexual practices. I understand that these questions are very personal, but they are important. Just so you know, I ask these questions to all of my patients. Like the rest of our visits, this information is kept in strict confidence. Do you have any questions before we get started?"

Some patients might be hesitant to share this information, especially adolescents for fear of disclosure. Be sure to remind patients why you're asking these questions and to review confidentiality as it applies to their personal healthcare information.

Second, you want to identify risk factors that are more common in LGBT patients. These include mental health considerations and risks for certain sexually transmitted infections. Consider asking your patients about being bullied or teased in school, threatened or hurt by anyone, rejection by family members or feeling lonely or depressed. LGBT AYA are more likely to engage in substance use and abuse so you should also ask questions about those behaviours during your interview.

Finally, you should make sure you ask your patient about preventive screening practices. Check-in with your patient about factors which may be protective, such as the use of condoms, receipt of the HPV, Hepatitis A & B, and meningitis vaccines. Offer HIV and STI screening to **anyone** who is sexually active.

In summary, when you are caring for an AYA LGBT patient, ascertaining who they are through non-judgemental interviewing, identifying risk factors, and reinforcing preventive health behaviours can all provide ways to help keep patients safe and healthy.