

**Vulnerable Populations: A Deeper Look into the LGBTQ+ Community**

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“I have neither given nor receive, nor will I tolerate others’ use of unauthorized aid”.

### **A Deeper Look into the LGBTQ+ Community**

Imagine you were born in a world where you felt like you didn’t belong. Imagine having to keep a secret inside you for years, when all you wanted to do was be able to live your life how you feel you should. Most of all, imagine being scared to go to the doctor because you don’t think they would understand or sympathize with how you feel. Or in extreme cases refuse to treat you because of who you like, how you dress, or what you want to be addressed as. All of these fears are very prominent in the LGBTQ+ community. Today, we are going to take a deeper look into why this community is considered a vulnerable population and what we can do as nurses to help them and to promote justice for them.

A vulnerable population is a group that is “disproportionately affected by the provision, delivery, and optimal access to high-quality medical care including palliative, hospice, and end-of-life care. (Javier, 2021)” The LGBTQ+ population has been deemed a minority group for the obvious fact that people believe that they don’t classify for more than a small to lesser percent of the population. When discussing their culture, cultural competence is described in the book as “a developmental process that build continuous increases in knowledge and skill development in the areas of cultural awareness, knowledge, understanding, sensitivity, interaction, and skills (Burcham, 2002)” (Hood, 2018). Cultural competence should go almost hand and hand with the necessity of physical care. By not taking someone’s cultural into consideration when providing care there can be many negative effects on the patient. Just looking at the Maslow’s hierarchy pyramid that determines the basic needs of life in general, this topic would fall into at least four of the five parts of the pyramid such as self-actualization based on the removal of biases or prejudices, the esteem section because the esteem of the patient would drastically decline if they

felt they were not understood, the love and belonging because they will feel as if they don't belong when being treated like their identity doesn't matter, and lastly the safety needs for he reason that no one feels safe when they feel they are not thoroughly seen as a person. After those four categories we are left with the physical needs which is what brought them in to be taken care of. It is important to encompass as person as more than just what you see, but also how they feel and what values they hold true to themselves.

A survey was conducted on all undergraduate schools that are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education as to whether or not they felt their students were adequately prepared to care for the LGBTQ+ population in a healthcare setting (Eickhoff, 2021). The results received back were that nearly two-thirds of responding schools said that they felt their graduates were not prepared to care for them, and of that two-thirds, thirty-eight percent of the schools admitted that the faculty had the "knowledge needed to adequately teach this content." (Eickhoff, 2021). The main issue with this vulnerable population isn't necessarily the physical aspect of their care, that can be easily learned as new procedures come forward, but more so the fact of the matter is if the ones providing care can do it while maintaining a culturally competent attitude towards the patient's values and emotions.

As any member of a healthcare team, it is important to take a moment to reflect on personal beliefs and biases. Personally, I don't have many biases or judgements when it comes to this specific group. I think the better way for me to phrase it is, for a while I lacked education and understanding of how the community felt. But after getting out of my small town and connecting with new people around the world I came to a better understanding of their views. If I am being totally honest, although I don't necessarily fit into the LGBTQ+ community, I'd like to consider myself an ally for many reasons. I do have family and close friends who are a part of

the community. But even more importantly I firmly believe that people should be able to be what they want to be if it doesn't hurt anyone. It can go back to the old saying "If you can't say anything nice, don't say nuthin' at all,". In a world where today everyone is judged by things as childish as what they were, or how they look, it's important to remember the rules we were taught as kids when the world wasn't so complicated.

The next question becomes how do the roles of nursing and the nursing profession help to promote social justice in this category? As nurses we must follow a Code of Ethics. It really can be as simple as following the parts of this code because even making just one single member of the LGBTQ+ community feel seen and taken care of, can make a difference. Nurses also take on many roles with their patients and coworkers. We don't necessarily have to be out at rallies on the front lines (if you want to, then more power to you), but when it comes to roles such as leading and teaching, we can use these roles to make small changes. As a teacher, it is our duty to educate our client's and staff on topics. So maybe nurses can use that opportunity to teach a coworker a new way to view things, making sure not to try to step on their personal values or beliefs, but just opening each other's eyes and having meaningful conversation on the topic. When it comes to the leader position, the best way to lead someone is to lead by example. So, when you are treating a patient in the community, you can lead by example and show other coworkers not to judge based on their appearance or identification, but rather to give everyone an equal opportunity at life and healthy living. There are many other ways a nurse can promote justice for the LGBTQ+ community, but one must first examine the method of communication and make sure not to try and change someone completely but be kind and show them the side that you see. Remember it takes all kinds to make the world spin, so be kind, and treat others how you would want to be treated.

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