



Rainbow Wellness: Building Inclusive Healthcare for All

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BACKGROUND

In July 2024, the Division of Medical Oncology created a new clinic for adult lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual + (LGBTQIA+) patients diagnosed with breast cancer. The clinic was named the Rainbow Clinic to represent the patient population it was created to serve. In the US 7.2% of adults identify as LGBTQIA+. People in this demographic group, particularly people who identify as trans/gender diverse (TGD), experience significant disparities in cancer care including¹:

- Higher rates of late-stage diagnoses
- Poorer cancer outcomes
- Unaddressed side effects of therapy

People who identify as LGBTQIA+ have unique needs:

- Support of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in discussions and when documenting in the medical chart
- Potential interactions between gender affirming care and cancer-directed therapy
- Patients may have non-traditional support networks



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OBJECTIVES

The Division of Medical Oncology aimed to demonstrate how providing a comprehensive clinic designed for LGBTQIA+ cancer patients would:

- Better support patients' unique needs
- Improve clinical outcomes
- Develop/answer research questions about the unique cancer-related needs of this population

At the same time, it would demonstrate to patients that there is a safe space for LGBTQIA+ individuals to navigate breast cancer care.

PLANNING/RESEARCH

Key Steps in Determining Structure of the Rainbow Clinic:

- Benchmarking with other departments & institutions
- Patient feedback
- Assessment of current processes & resources

Only 33% of transgender people receive breast cancer screening².

Factors include^{1,2}:

- Lack of data & unclear guidelines
- Insurance coverage gaps
- Acts of discrimination or mistreatment at healthcare facilities

There is a significant need to overcome barriers, as transgender individuals may face a higher risk of breast cancer than cisgender individuals due to the effects of transition treatments, and screening can be more challenging¹.

IMPLEMENTATION

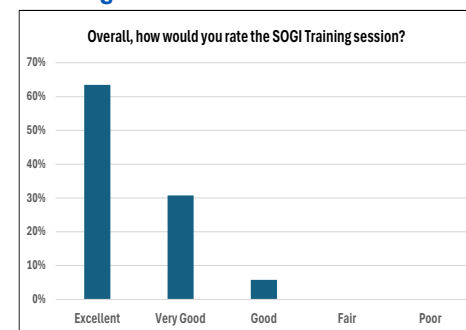
Patient Intake & Scheduling – The questionnaire schedulers complete with all breast cancer patients by phone was altered to add scripting for the new clinic. Every adult breast cancer patient is asked if they wish to be seen in the Rainbow Clinic.

Supportive Clinical Space – Visual safety cues include signs stating “All are Welcome “ and strategically placed pride flags. Staff in the clinic are encouraged to wear pronoun and pride pins on their ID badges. Private, gender- neutral bathrooms are available, and exam rooms contain non-gendered patient education materials.

Staff Education – Staff working in the clinic complete education on healthcare challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ patients, definitions and appropriate use of affirming language & proper medical record documentation.

Generating Awareness – Public awareness of the Rainbow Clinic was created using articles on social media blogs, institutional websites and local newspapers.

FIGURE 1 – Staff Satisfaction with Training



RESULTS

In the first six months of operation, six patients have been cared for in the Rainbows Clinic totaling approximately 36 provider visits. The team is measuring both patient and staff satisfaction as both are drivers for why this clinic is important. Patient feedback shared verbally to date has been very positive. Survey feedback collected from the staff training sessions showed that 94% felt the training was excellent or very good (Figure1) and 100% felt the content was relevant and would recommend the session to others.

DISCUSSION

As this is a brand-new clinic, the Division will evaluate utilization monthly and review feedback received from staff and patients at twelve months to identify opportunities for improvement.

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