

# Evidence-Based Gender-Affirming Care: A New Quality Standard

David Kaplan

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# PRESENTER DISCLOSURE

Presenter: David Kaplan, MD

## Relationships with financial sponsors:

 Any direct financial relationships, including receipt of honoraria:

None

 Membership on advisory boards or speakers' bureaus:

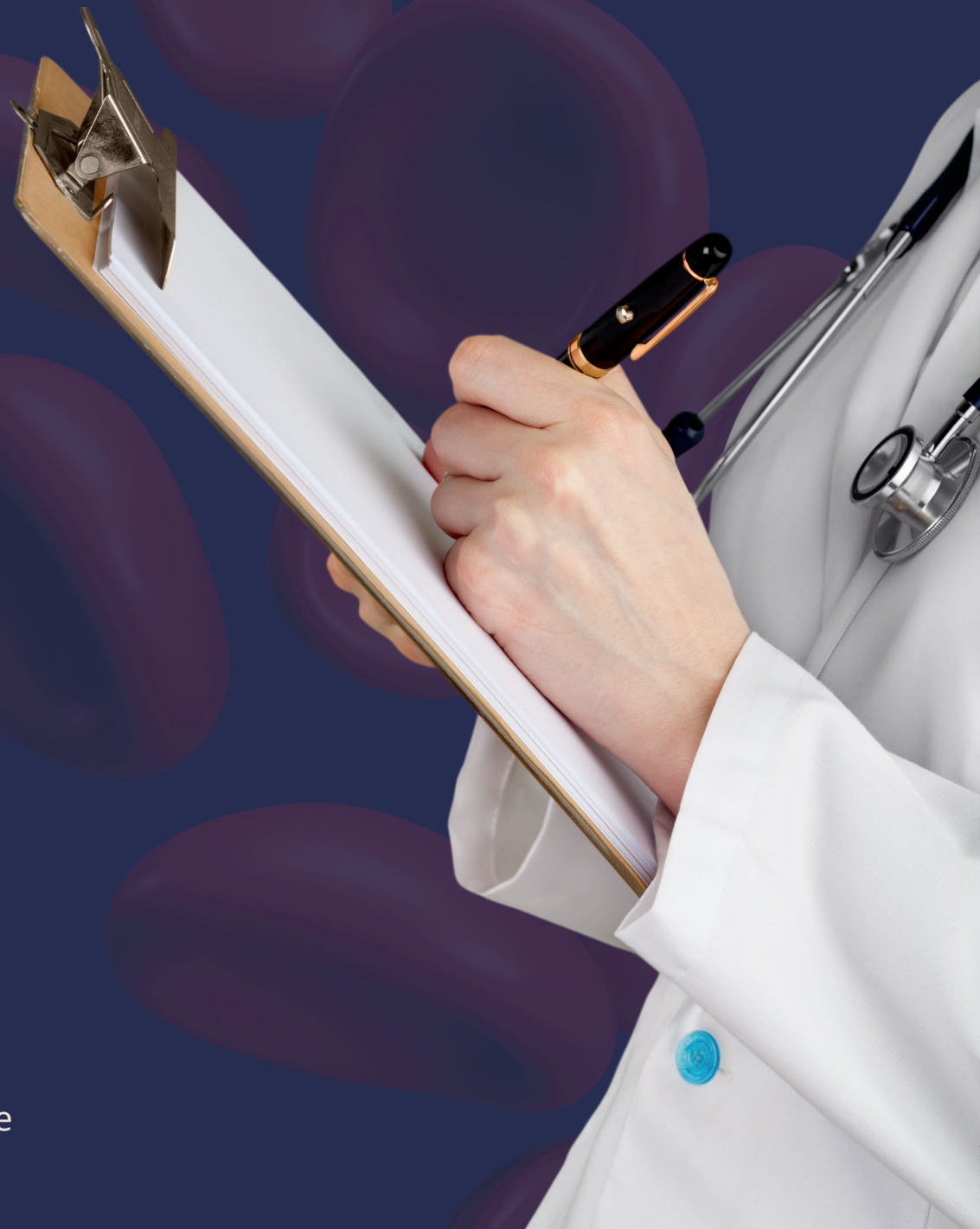
None

 Patents for drugs or devices:

None

 Other:

Salaried employee of Ontario Health, North York Family Medicine Centre, Temerty Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto



# DISCLOSURE OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT



**This program has received financial support from Ontario Health in the form of monies for registration and travel expenses**



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**Potential for conflict(s) of interest:  
None**

# Learning objectives

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Following the presentation, attendees will be able to:

- Describe what Ontario Health's quality standards are, their development, and how to access them
- Identify opportunities in their own practices to improve gender-affirming care for gender-diverse adults
- Access useful tools and resources for use in their clinical practices and to share with gender-diverse clients



Why do we need a quality  
standard for gender-affirming  
care?



*Gender-affirming care* refers to health care that recognizes and affirms the gender identity and expression of gender-diverse people, whether socially, medically, legally, or some combination of these.<sup>1,2</sup>



1 in 300 people in Ontario (0.33%) identified as gender diverse in the 2021 census,<sup>3</sup> and the need for gender-affirming care is growing.<sup>4</sup>

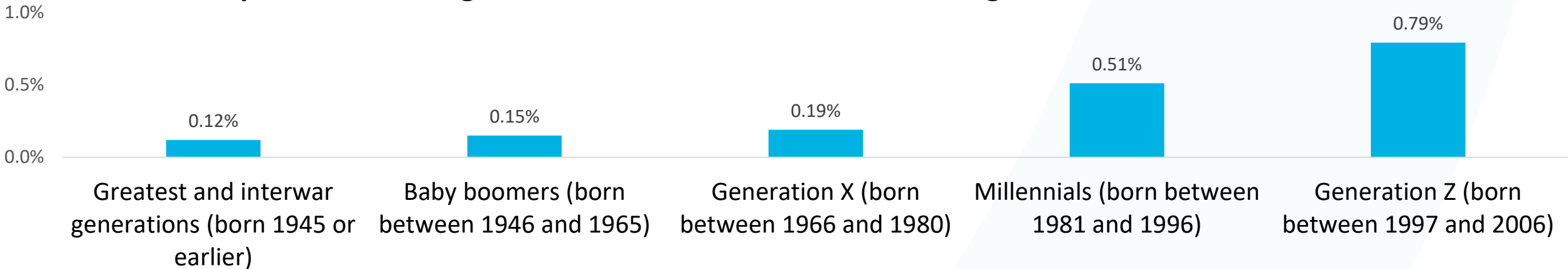


Gender-diverse people experience discrimination, minority stress, and barriers to accessing health care, all of which contribute to worse physical and mental health outcomes compared with their cisgender peers.<sup>5,6</sup>

1. Coleman et al, 2022, [Standards of care for the health of transgender and gender diverse people, version 8.](#)
2. Reisner and Murchison, 2016, [A global research synthesis of HIV and STI biobehavioural risks in female-to-male transgender adults.](#)
3. Statistics Canada, 2021 Canadian census, *The Daily*, April 27, 2022: [Canada is the first country to provide census data on transgender and nonbinary people.](#)
4. Vandermorris and Metzger, 2023, [An affirming approach to caring for transgender and gender-diverse youth.](#)
5. Flentje et al, 2022, [Minority stress, structural stigma, and physical health among sexual and gender minority individuals: examining the relative strength of the relationships.](#)
6. Hendricks and Testa, 2012, [A conceptual framework for clinical work with transgender and gender nonconforming clients: an adaptation of the Minority Stress Model.](#)

# To meet the needs of the growing gender-diverse community, access to gender-affirming care will need to be made more widely available

Proportion of each generational cohort that identified as gender-diverse in Canada, 2021<sup>1</sup>



Gender diversity is increasing; the rise may be associated with the dismantling of societal stigmas.<sup>1,2</sup> As a result, the gender-diverse community in Canada is younger, with an average age of 39.4 years, compared to 48.0 years among the cisgender population.<sup>1</sup>

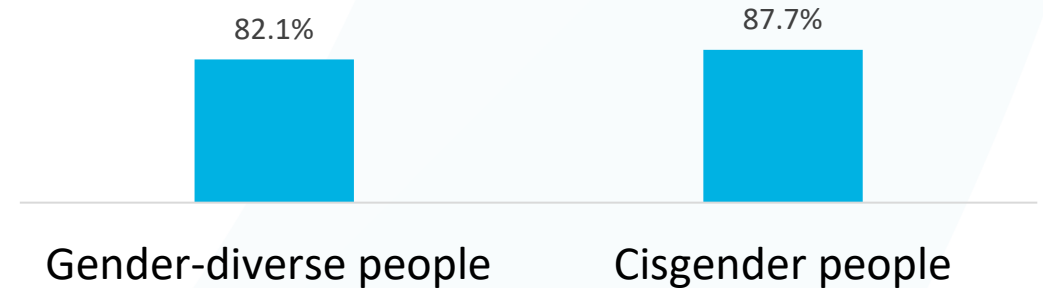
1. Statistics Canada, 2021 Canadian census, *The Daily*, April 27, 2022: [Canada is the first country to provide census data on transgender and nonbinary people.](#)

2. Zhang et al, 2020, [Epidemiological considerations in transgender health: a systematic review with focus on higher quality data.](#)

# Gender-diverse adults have lower self-reported health and more unmet health care needs than cisgender adults

- Between 2019 and 2021, 82.1% of gender-diverse adults in Ontario rated their health positively (good, very good, or excellent), compared to 87.7% of cisgender adults<sup>1</sup>
- In the 2019 Trans PULSE Canada survey, 42.3% of gender-diverse respondents in Ontario reported having unmet health care needs in the past year,<sup>2</sup> compared to 4.8% in the general Ontario population<sup>3</sup>

Percentage of gender-diverse and cisgender adults in Ontario who rated their health positively, 2019, 2020, and 2021<sup>1</sup>



1. Canadian Community Health Survey, Ontario Share File; 2019, 2020, and 2021 combined.

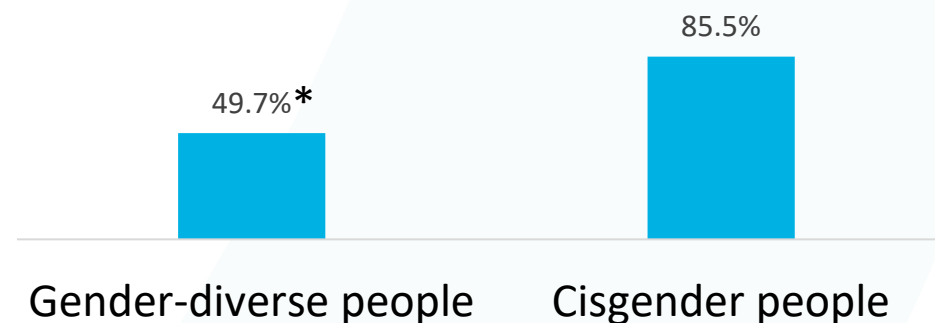
2. Scheim et al., 2021, [Health care access among transgender and nonbinary people in Canada, 2019: a cross-sectional survey](#).

3. Canadian Community Health Survey, Ontario Share File, 2019 and 2020 combined.

# Gender-diverse adults rate their mental health considerably worse than cisgender adults

- 49.7% of gender-diverse adults rated their mental health positively (good, very good, or excellent)\*, compared to 85.5% of cisgender adults<sup>1</sup>
- Systemic discrimination, lack of access to gender-affirming care, marginalization, and economic insecurity may be associated with negative mental health outcomes among gender-diverse people<sup>2-4</sup>

Percentage of gender-diverse and cisgender adults in Ontario who rated their mental health positively, 2019, 2020, and 2021<sup>1</sup>



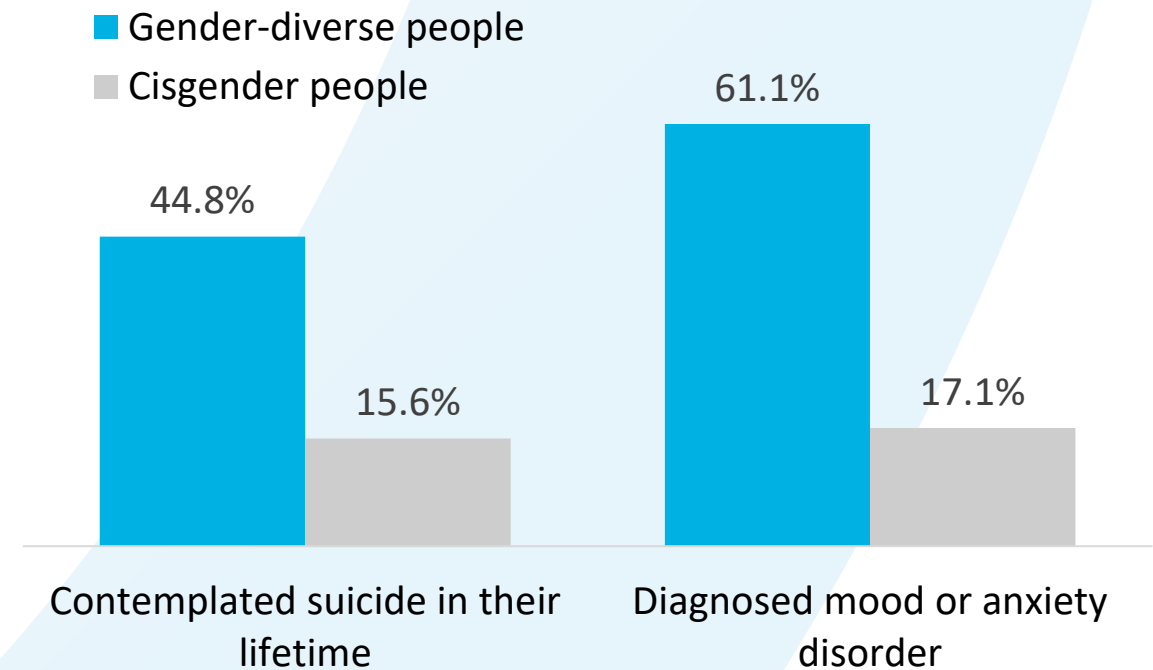
1. Canadian Community Health Survey, Ontario Share File; 2019, 2020, and 2021 combined.
2. Statistics Canada, 2020, [Experiences of violent victimization and unwanted sexual behaviours among gay, lesbian, bisexual and other sexual minority people, and the transgender population, in Canada, 2018](#).
3. Statistics Canada, 2021 Canadian census, *The Daily*, April 27, 2022, [Canada is the first country to provide census data on transgender and nonbinary people](#).
4. Bhatt et al., 2022, [Gender-affirming care for transgender patients](#).

\*Interpret these findings with caution as there was a high sampling variability in the estimate.

# Gender-affirming care is important for addressing mental health disparities, including suicidality and mental health diagnoses

- Gender-diverse people were more likely to report poorer mental health outcomes, such as having contemplated suicide or having a diagnosis of a mood or anxiety disorder, than cisgender people<sup>1</sup>
- Access to gender-affirming care is associated with better mental health outcomes and reduced suicidality<sup>2,3</sup>

Self-reported mental health among gender-diverse and cisgender people in Canada, 2018<sup>1</sup>



1. Statistics Canada, [2018 survey of safety in public and private spaces](#), reported in *The Daily*, April 27, 2022, [Canada is the first country to provide census data on transgender and nonbinary people](#).

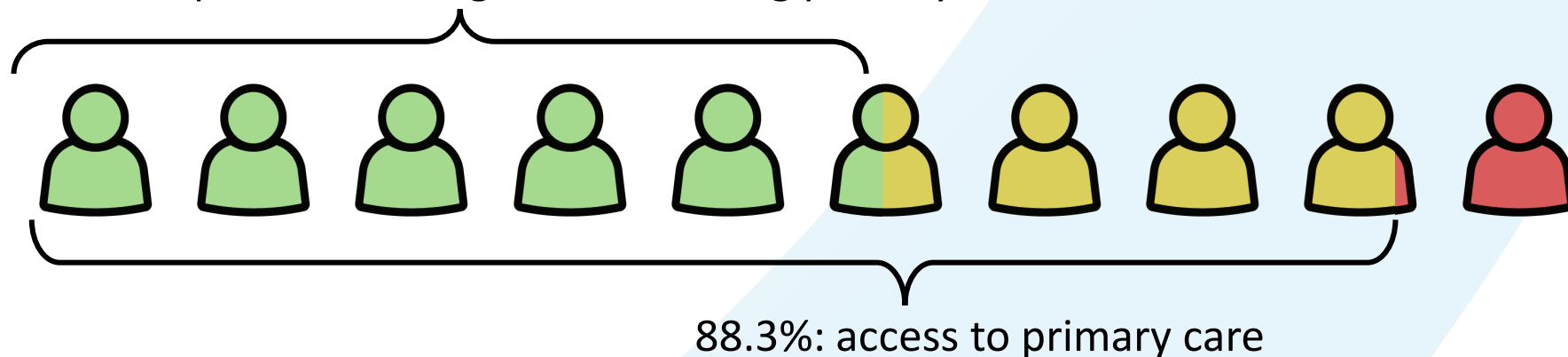
2. Tordoff et al, 2022, [Mental health outcomes in transgender and nonbinary youths receiving gender-affirming care](#).

3. Jarrett et al, 2021, [Gender-affirming care, mental health, and economic stability in the time of COVID-19: a multi-national, cross-sectional study of transgender and nonbinary people](#).

# Gender-affirming primary care is not currently accessible to all gender-diverse adults in Ontario

- Between 2019 and 2021, 88.3% of gender-diverse adults and 88.5% of cisgender adults in Ontario reported having a regular primary care clinician (a family doctor, general practitioner, or nurse practitioner)<sup>1</sup>
- In the 2019 Trans PULSE Canada survey,<sup>2</sup> only 54.6% of gender-diverse respondents in Ontario reported having a primary care clinician with whom they felt comfortable discussing issues related to their gender identity

54.6%: comfortable experience with gender-affirming primary care



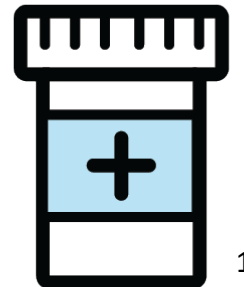
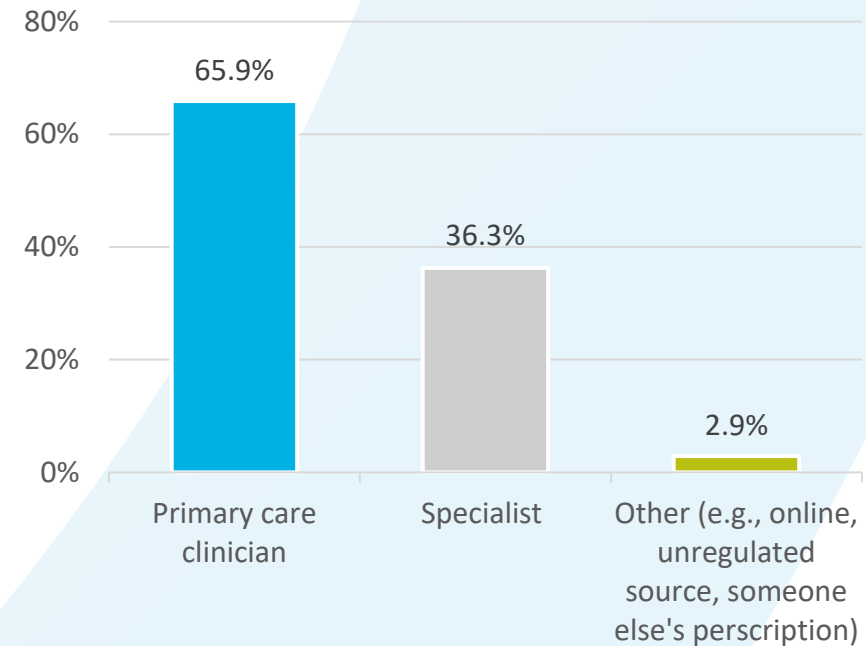
1. Canadian Community Health Survey, Ontario Share File, 2019 and 2020 combined.

2. Scheim et al, 2021, [Health care access among transgender and nonbinary people in Canada, 2019: a cross-sectional survey.](#)

# Gender-affirming hormone therapy is most often prescribed in primary care

- The 2019 Trans PULSE Canada survey found that two-thirds of the hormone therapy of Ontario respondents was prescribed in primary care<sup>1</sup>
- Primary care clinicians are encouraged to take an active role in helping people access gender-affirming hormone therapy.<sup>2,3</sup> Better access via primary care may reduce overall wait times, alleviate the strain on specialists, and improve patient safety by diverting people away from unregulated sources of hormone therapy medications

Self-reported source of gender-affirming hormone therapy, Ontario, 2019<sup>1</sup>



1. Personal communication, Trans PULSE Canada study team, June 6, 2024.  
2. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, [Gender Identity Clinic](#), accessed June 2024.  
3. Rainbow Health Ontario, [How do I access or start hormone replacement therapy?](#), accessed June 2024.

# Opportunities exist to improve clinical competency in meeting the health care needs of gender-diverse adults

Limited education and training on gender-affirming care has been identified as a constraint among medical students and nurses in Ontario.<sup>1,2</sup> A qualitative analysis of physician-perceived barriers found difficulty in accessing resources and referral networks, as well as deficits in medical knowledge, as main barriers.<sup>3</sup>



The following key enablers to build capacity among clinicians to provide gender-affirming care have been identified<sup>4,5</sup>:

- Continuing education
- Clinical practice guidelines
- Professional shadowing
- Mentorship
- Including gender-affirming care in curricula

1. Chan et al, 2016, [Gaps in transgender medicine content identified among Canadian medical school curricula.](#)
2. Ziegler, 2020, [The integral role of nurses in primary care for transgender people: a qualitative descriptive study.](#)
3. Snelgrove et al, 2012, [“Completely out-at-sea” with “two-gender medicine”: a qualitative analysis of physician-side barriers to providing healthcare for transgender patients.](#)
4. Ziegler et al, 2020, [Models of care and team activities in the delivery of transgender primary care: an Ontario case study.](#)
5. Rainbow Health Ontario, 2021, [Guidelines for gender-affirming primary care with trans and non-binary patients.](#)



Introducing the *Gender-Affirming  
Care for Gender-Diverse People:*  
*Care for Adults* quality standard

# What are quality standards?

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- Inform clinicians and patients what high-quality care looks like
- Focus on conditions or processes where there are large variations in how care is delivered or where there are gaps between the care provided in Ontario and the care patients should receive
- Are grounded in the best-available evidence

# Advisory committee

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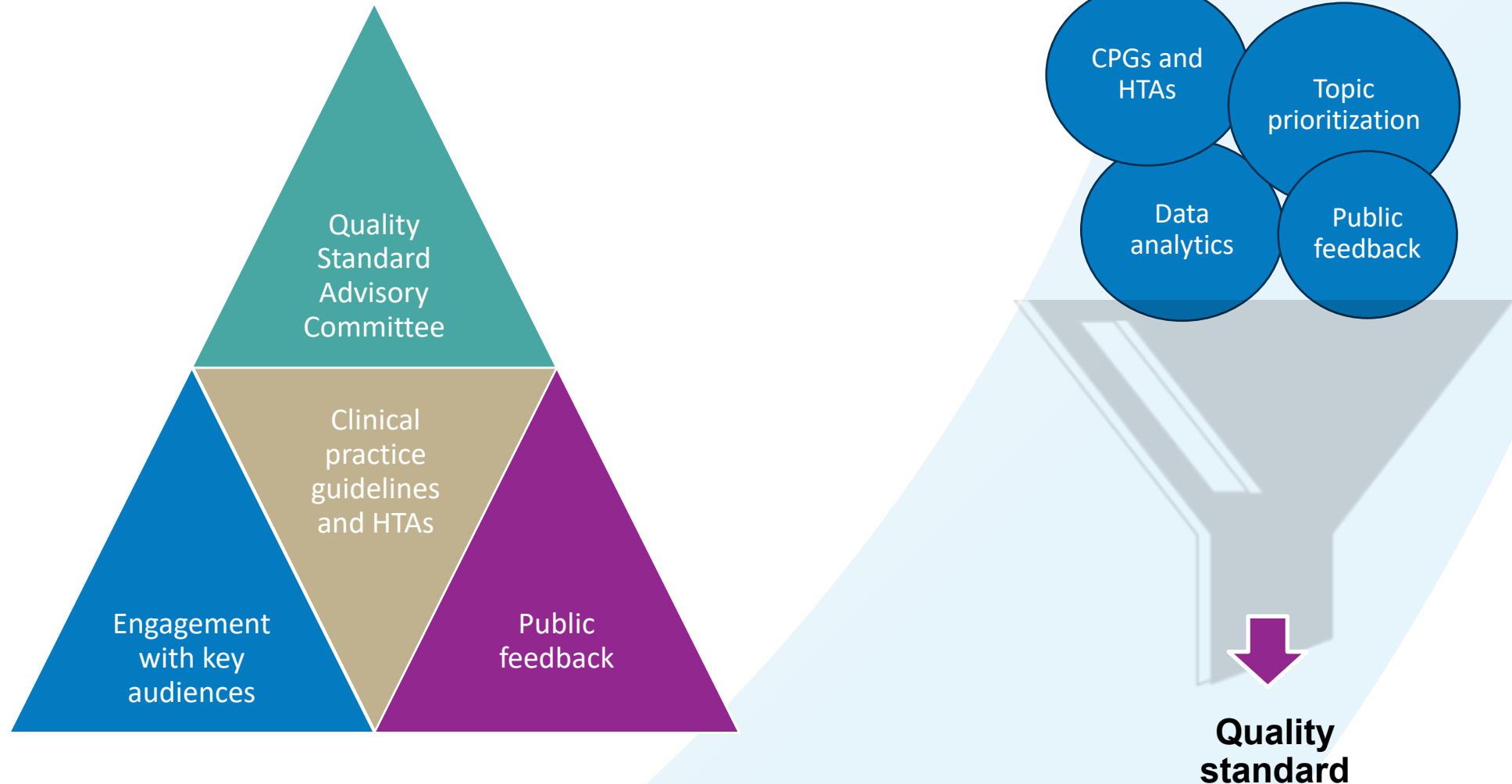
Egag Egag (co-chair)  
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Nael Bhanji  
Dillon Black  
Holly Brown (LEA)  
Kate Greenaway  
Carley Hoja  
Susan Hranilovic  
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Mackenzie Mawson (LEA)  
Sean Robinson

Elena Salgado (LEA)  
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SJ Vriend  
Angelina Wiwczor

**Ex-officio members:**

Jodi Asphall  
Sanober Diaz  
Taylah Harris-Mungo  
Sil Hernando  
Juan Ortiz

# Key inputs for quality standard development



# Scope of this quality standard

- This quality standard addresses care for gender-diverse adults aged 18 years and older. The quality standard focuses on gender-affirming care and the primary care needs of gender-diverse adults, including assessment, screening, treatment, and follow-up. It addresses primary care referral for gender-affirming surgical assessment, based on clinical evidence, but not specific surgical procedures.
- Although many statements may apply to intersex people, this quality standard does not directly address the care of intersex people.



# Quality statement topics

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1. Gender-affirming education and training for health care teams
2. Gender-affirming primary care
3. Gender-affirming hormone therapy
4. Gender-affirming mental health care
5. Gender-affirming health care environments

# Quality standard resources



Quality Standard



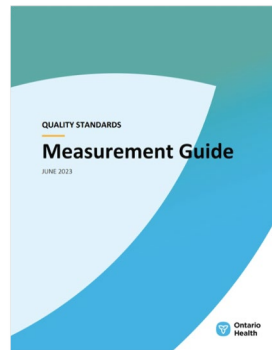
Patient Guide



Placemat



Case for Improvement Deck



Measurement Guide



Technical Specifications



Getting Started Guide

Find these resources here:

<https://www.hqontario.ca/evidence-to-improve-care/quality-standards/view-all-quality-standards/gender-affirming-care-for-gender-diverse-people>



# Case studies

# At your table: Exploring the quality standard

1. Review the case study
2. Refer to the [\*Gender-Affirming Care for Gender-Diverse People: Care for Adults\*](#) placemat
3. Answer the discussion questions at your table
4. Recap with larger group



Link to placemat

# Case 1: Jessica



- 44-year-old white transfeminine person who socially transitioned 12 months ago
- Wants to begin feminizing hormone therapy
- Acknowledges frequent anxiety and often consuming more alcohol than she intends to in order to relax
- You have never prescribed hormone therapy for gender-affirming care before. You think a specialist referral may be necessary given Jessica's mental health needs
- Jessica shows you the quality standard patient guide and asserts that she should be able to receive hormone therapy from her primary care clinician regardless of her concurrent mental health needs

## At your table:

1. Refer to the *Gender-Affirming Care* placemat
2. Review quality statements 1, 3, and 4
3. Discuss opportunities to improve care for Jessica

# Gender-affirming education and training for health care teams



Gender-diverse adults receive care from clinicians who have the clinical and cultural competency and cultural humility to provide safe and appropriate gender-affirming care. Health care organizations provide ongoing gender-affirming education and training for health care teams to build organizational capacity to deliver equitable care.

# Primary care toolkit for trans and gender-diverse clients

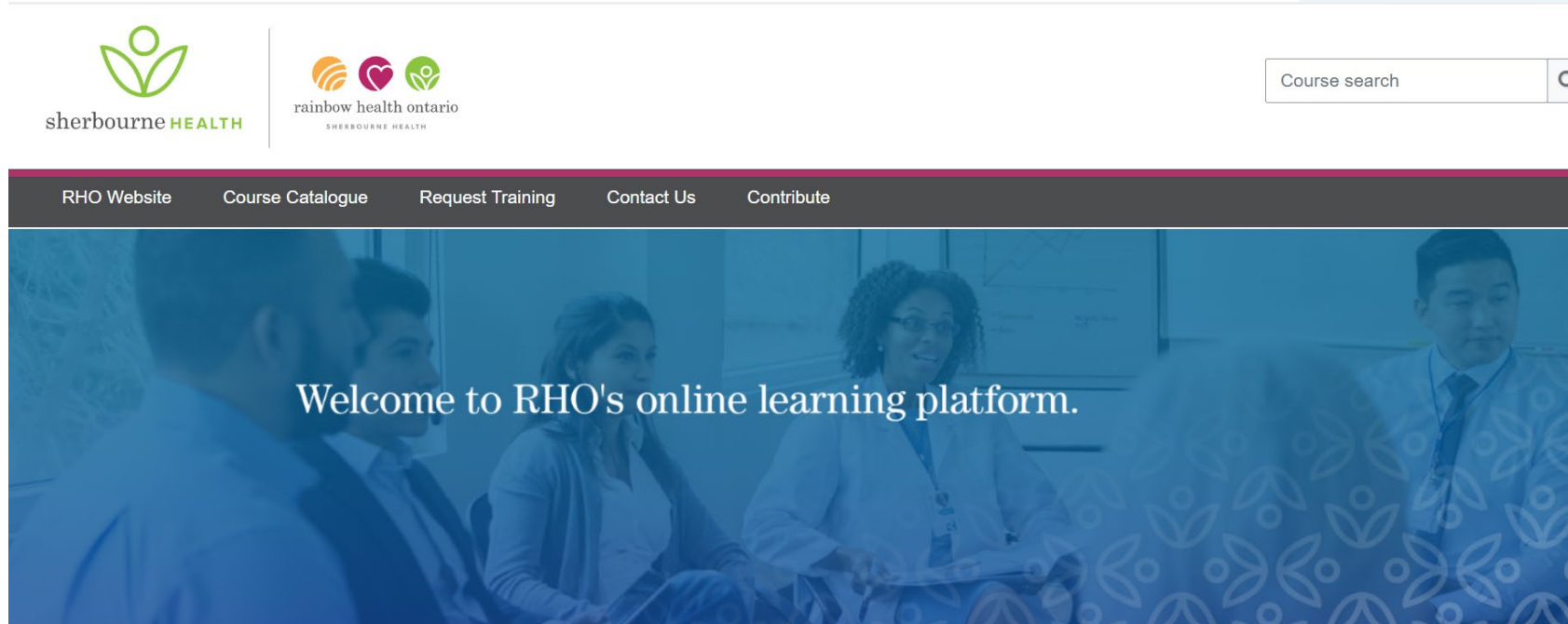


## My guide to caring for trans and gender-diverse patients

- A comprehensive guide for primary care clinicians from Sherbourne Health and Rainbow Health Ontario
- Includes an overview of trans and gender-diverse health issues, terminology, how to assess newly transitioning clients, and clinical guidance on providing gender-affirming hormone therapy

[RainbowHealthOntario.ca/TransHealthGuide/index.html](https://RainbowHealthOntario.ca/TransHealthGuide/index.html)

# 2SLGBTQ Health Connect



- An online learning platform from Rainbow Health Ontario
- Provides low-cost, on-demand, facilitated virtual courses to help clinicians build competence in providing gender-affirming care

[Learn.RainbowHealthOntario.ca](https://Learn.RainbowHealthOntario.ca)

# Opportunities to connect with experts

- [Trans Health Mentorship Call](#): A teleconference held twice a month for Ontario clinicians to connect with peers with experience caring for trans and nonbinary service users, facilitated by Rainbow Health Ontario
- [eConsult Ontario](#): A secure web-based tool that allows primary care clinicians timely access to specialists, including those with expertise in gender-affirming care, often eliminating the need for an in-person specialist visit

# Find resources on Quorum



**Quorum** is an online community dedicated to improving the quality of health care in Ontario.

The [Gender-Affirming Care for Adults Quality Standard: Tools for Implementation](#) post provides tools and resources to support the implementation of the quality statements.



# Gender-affirming hormone therapy

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Gender-diverse adults have access to gender-affirming hormone therapy from a primary care clinician.  
Gender-affirming hormone therapy meets the needs and preferences of gender-diverse adults.

# Guidelines for Gender-Affirming Primary Care With Trans And Non-binary Patients: A Quick Reference Guide for Primary Care Providers

- 9-page summary of transition-related protocols from Sherbourne Health and Rainbow Health Ontario
- Includes information on estrogen and testosterone formulations, dosages, costs, effects and expected time courses, monitoring, dosage adjustments, and precautions

## EFFECTS AND EXPECTED TIME COURSE OF FEMINIZING HORMONES

The degree and rate of physical effects are largely dependent on patient-specific factors such as age, genetics, body habitus and lifestyle, and to some extent the dose and route used (selected in accordance with a patient's specific goals and risk profile).<sup>8</sup>



# Gender-affirming mental health care

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Gender-diverse adults are offered trauma-informed, person-centred, gender-affirming care for mental health and substance use concerns as needed. These concerns are considered concurrently with gender incongruence and gender diversity as needed. Care for all aspects of health and well-being is delivered as part of a comprehensive care plan.

# Finding gender-affirming mental health support

The **patient guide** contains links to resources to support the mental health needs of gender-diverse adults, including:

- [A service provider directory](#)
- [How having a mental health diagnosis other than gender dysphoria can affect people's care](#)
- [How to find the right counsellor](#)
- [Where to get free counselling](#)



# Case 2: River

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- 27-year-old Black nonbinary person who is a new client of your family health team
- Informs you they have been taking testosterone for 2 years as prescribed by a virtual clinic
- River has been unattached to primary care for 3 years because their former provider was not gender-affirming
- River shares that the receptionist “deadnamed” them after seeing their OHIP card

## **At your table:**

1. Refer to the Gender-Affirming Care placemat
2. Review quality statements 2 and 5
3. Discuss opportunities to improve care for River

# Gender-affirming primary care

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Gender-diverse adults receive appropriate and compassionate gender-affirming primary care health assessments, screening, treatment, and follow-up. This care is based on their needs and preferences and is appropriate for their age, gender, and current anatomy.

# Primary care resources on Quorum



The **Gender-Affirming Care for Adults Quality Standard: Tools for Implementation** post on Quorum outlines resources to support the primary care needs of gender-diverse adults, including:

- [Tips for Providing Pap Tests to Trans Men](#)
- [Reproductive Options for Trans People](#)
- [Overarching Policy for the Screening of Trans People in the Ontario Breast Screening Program and the Ontario Cervical Screening Program](#)
- [Transition-related surgical summary sheets](#)



# Gender-affirming health care environments

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Gender-diverse adults receive care in a safe, trauma-informed, gender-affirming, and culturally responsive environment. Person-centred care is provided throughout their care journeys.

# Resources for creating a gender-affirming environment

[Creating Affirming Services](#) is a web page from Trans Care BC with resources for creating culturally safe, affirming clinical environments for gender-diverse people, including:

- [Organizational Assessment Tool for Health Care & Support Services](#)
- [Service Provider Reflection Tool for Individual Service Providers & Support Staff](#)
- [Accessible Care Strategies for Organizations and Programs](#)
- [Making Mistakes and Correcting Them](#)

**TRANS CARE BC**  
Provincial Health Services Authority

### Directions

- 1** Select relevant strategies in each category.

Then, consider the following questions:

- 2** Where are we currently at? (level)
- 3** What would enable us to score 1+ level higher? (action items)
- 4** Who could help us make these changes? (supports)
- 5** When could we take these steps? (target dates)

### Terminology

**Gender Diverse** refers to individuals who do not identify as the sex they were assigned at birth. This includes, but is not limited to, transgender, non-binary, and Two-Spirit people seeking gender-affirming care.

**Client** refers to all clients, patients, residents, and service users accessing care unless otherwise specified.

**Staff** refers to anyone employed by your organization unless otherwise specified. This may also include contractors and volunteers.

**People** refers to anyone who may be present in your service, including staff, volunteers, contractors, clients, family members, advocates, and all others who access the service or space.

2 Organizational Assessment Tool Trans Care BC - PHSA



# Additional resources

# Earn extra Mainpro+® credits for reading the quality standard

- Earn an extra 1.75 Mainpro+® credits by reading the *Gender-Affirming Care for Gender-Diverse People: Care for Adults* quality standard through the **Understanding Quality Standards in Primary Care Program\***
- Review the quality standard and then complete and submit a short self-reflection exercise to receive credits
- To learn more, contact [UnderstandQS@OntarioHealth.ca](mailto:UnderstandQS@OntarioHealth.ca)



\*This self-learning program (1 credit per hour) has been certified by the College of Family Physicians of Canada and the Ontario chapter for up to 70.0 credits. Registration is open year-round.

# Technical specifications

The **technical specifications** report outlines 2 types of measurement:

- **Provincial measurement:** how we can monitor the progress being made to improve care at the provincial level
- **Local measurement:** what you can do to assess the quality of care that you provide locally



# THANK YOU!

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