Quick Reference Guide for LGBTQ+ Inclusive Communication

Use this tool as a reference at any point during the clinical encounter. It can also be supplemental material for training office staff, residents, fellows and other clinicians.

Your commitment to inclusive language supports equity in health care for LGBTQ+ individuals as well as belonging for all members of the ACC community as detailed in the 2022 ACC Health Policy Statement on Building Respect, Civility, and Inclusion in the Cardiovascular Workplace.

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There are 20 million LGBTQ+ people in U.S. – nearly 8% of the population

In a U.S. study, 18% of LGBTQ+ adults – and 22% of transgender adults – avoided seeking health care due to anticipated discrimination

16% of LGBTQ adults reported LGBTQ+ during clinical encounters

2018 Southern Trans Health Focus Group Project: 24% had to teach their provider about transgender people, 15% were asked unnecessary or invasive questions about transgender status

These conversations matter because...
**LGBTQ+ TERMINOLOGY**

Always defer to your LGBTQ+ patients or colleagues and the terms they use to describe themselves. For a comprehensive listing of definitions, access ACC’s “LGBTQIA+ Terminology to Build Your Vocabulary”.

### Tips for Communicating with Patients and Colleagues

#### Introductions

“Hi, I’m Dr Beck and I use the pronouns she/her.”

“How would you like me to refer to you?”

“What pronouns do you use?”

#### Chief Complaint

Avoid getting distracted by a patient’s identity and find out what’s most important to them first.

“What brings you here today?”

“What brought you into the hospital?”

#### Social History

Open up space for patients to discuss all kinds of families.

“Who are the most important people in your life?”

“Who do you consider to be your family?”

“Who do you live with or who lives with you?”

“Who are the people in your life who support you/care for you?”

#### Sexual History

Discuss only if necessary to your care of the patient.

“Are you sexually active?”

“What is/are the gender(s) of your partner(s)?”

#### Dos and Don’ts

**Do…**

- Say – “Lee is a transgender man.”
- Say – “Lee’s pronouns are they/them.”

**Don’t …**

- Say – “Lee is a transgender” or “Lee is a woman who identifies as a man.”
- Say – “Lee’s preferred pronouns are they/them.”
- Use EMR dot phrases using the wrong gender or deadname.
- List a patient’s identity in a problem list or as a medical diagnosis.
**Steps for LGBTQ+ Inclusive Interactions and Environments: Anticipate and Welcome LGBTQ+ Patients**

| Inclusive forms | “What is the name you use?”  
|                 | “What sex were you assigned at birth?”  
|                 | “What is your current gender identity?”  
|                 | “What pronouns do you use?”  
| Train clinician and office staff to use inclusive language |  
|                 | • “How may I help you today?”  
|                 | - omit sir or ma’am  
|                 | • Don’t assume gender identity or sexual orientation  
|                 | • Review name/pronoun before speaking with the patient  
|                 | • Use patient’s chosen name and pronouns - politely ask patient in private if not sure  
| Signal support up front |  
|                 | • Include LGBTQ+ positive resources  
|                 | • Wear pronoun buttons or rainbow lapel pins  
|                 | • Provide gender neutral bathrooms  
| Inclusive/affirming physical exam |  
|                 | • Remember that sexual abuse and trauma are common  
|                 | • Trust and rapport may take longer to develop  
|                 | • Avoid satisfying your curiosity  
|                 | • Use principles of trauma-informed care  
|                 | - Power lies with the patient  
|                 | - Seek permission for all parts of the exam  
|                 | - Avoid surprise touches  

**MISTAKES HAPPEN**

Don’t – Make excuses or drag out the apology  
Do – Recognize, correct, apologize and move on

**KEEP IT GENDER NEUTRAL**

Groups of People  
You all, y’all, everyone, folks  
Married Partner  
Spouse, partner  
Unmarried Partner  
Partner, significant other  
Gender Neutral Pronouns:  
They/them, zie/zir, and sie/hirs
READY FOR MORE?

Resources to support your inclusive care of LGBTQ+ patients:

- FOR PHYSICIANS:
  - GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality (GLMA.org)

- FOR PATIENTS:
  - OutCare Health (outhealthcare.org)
    - check out the Out Talk series and Cultural Competency trainings
  - The National LGBTQ Health Education Center (lgbthealtheducation.org)
  - PFLAG: Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (pflag.org)

Learn more at ACC.org/Respect

Learn more at ACC.org/Respect and explore ACC.org/Diversity for additional information on webinars, terminology, and other DE&I efforts