

## Guest Editor Introduction

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Throughout history, marginalized communities that are not part of the dominant culture have faced difficulties and challenges. There have been religious, legal, and political forces at work to keep such communities of people on the margins of society through systemic discrimination. The communities of people represented in this issue of the Delaware Journal of Public Health are no different in this regard. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/gender non-conforming, queer and others are not well represented in our heteronormative and cisgender normative culture and face daily challenges and barriers to achieving optimal health.

These barriers and challenges cause significant health risks for the LGBTQ+ population as seen in national health data (higher suicide rates and lower cancer and preventive health screening rates). Despite this systemic discrimination, the remarkable resiliency of the LGBTQ+ community enables them to thrive in the face of an oftentimes unfriendly welcome in society, and in the institutions that form the foundation of our lives as a larger community. There are many organizations and individuals working to reverse this discrimination and these poor health statistics, and this issue of the DJPH demonstrates the exceptional work many are doing across the state to reverse these trends and support our LGBTQ+ community.

Despite the many challenges in providing safe spaces and high quality healthcare for our LGBTQ+ community, the state of Delaware has made great progress in protecting LGBTQ rights, including passing the Gender Identity Non-Discrimination Act of 2013. Healthcare institutions are no different in this regard, and face the reality that transformation and cultural shifts need to occur so that LGBTQ+ identified people and populations are truly welcomed. Without these changes, health disparities will continue to occur, and optimal health will continue to challenge LGBTQ+ identified populations.

As we look to the future, it is clear we have work to do to continue to support our LGBTQ+ family, friends, neighbors and patients in their health and well-being. In this journal, we hope to highlight the efforts of those working to bring about this much needed change, to outline some of the successes and challenges this vulnerable population faces in their communities and healthcare environments, and to highlight the importance of providing a safe space for patients, regardless of sexuality or gender identity. We also seek to describe resources currently in place to improve on overall well-being, to describe resources needing improvement or development, and to place this into the larger framework of innovation and transformation happening in society and in healthcare to address the unique needs of LGBTQ+ populations.

Strides have been made, but advancements need to continue to occur. As we look to the future to ensure the equitable health and wellbeing for all LGBTQ+ Delawareans, collaboration is essential.

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