



Poster # 13

Title of poster: Fostering end-of-life conversations, community and care among LGBT older adults

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Abstract

Rational: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) older adults are often described as a doubly invisible population – invisible as LGBT older persons in the heteronormative environment of social services and health, and invisible as elders within the LGBT community. More likely to be without partners and without children, the primary caregivers of older adults, LGBT older adults look to friends and chosen family for care and support in later life —those same persons who are less likely to be socially groomed for such care and less likely to have participated in such care discussions. When this network is unavailable, unrecognized, or unaccepted, higher rates of loneliness and isolation result leading to further exacerbation of serious and life-limiting conditions.

Objectives: This project has three primary goals: (1) to understand and describe the issues involved in and the preparedness for aging and end-of-life planning among LGBT adults aged 60 and over; (2) to share knowledge and resources that will foster and encourage individual action and develop a greater sense of community; and (3) to provide a safe and supportive environment in which information about planning for aging and end-of-life can be accessed and lead to action.

Method: The empirical component of this project will begin with four focus groups in five major cities across Canada. Three of the four groups will comprise LGBT older adults: (1) gay and bisexual men; (2) lesbians and bisexual women; and (3) transgender persons. The fourth group will consist of local service providers/agency representatives who provide services to LGBT older adults. Following the focus groups a town hall meeting will be held in each city at which analysed and summarized themes from the focus groups, information from state-of-the-field research findings, and information from service providers and agency managers who provide services to LGBT older adults will be presented. The final knowledge transfer component of the project is to develop a pilot web-based resource that will allow further knowledge transfer enabling and empowering a traditionally disenfranchised group to improve their quality of life and well-being, including end of life.

Discussion: By initiating and facilitating discussions about aging and end-of-life planning within the LGBT community, and by making knowledge available and easily accessible through a web-

based platform, LGBT older adults will be empowered and motivated to use the resource as a community building tool enabling individual and communal planning and support in later life.

