

LGBT+ women face barriers to healthcare

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LGBT+ women face barriers when accessing healthcare, according to a review published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

The research, led by Professor Catherine Meads of Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), examined the experiences of LGBT+ women in the UK between 2010 and 2018 by analysing [numerous studies](#) in different health areas.

It showed similar problems faced by sexual minority women, who frequently experienced ignorance and prejudice from healthcare professionals, as well as barriers when raising concerns and complaints.

One woman cited in the review said: "If you were feeling bad about yourself, you've got [low self-esteem](#) or had the experience of homophobic abuse, and then you went somewhere and couldn't find the information you wanted, it reinforces the difference."

Women also complained of negative responses to coming out and frequent assumptions of heterosexuality. One woman, who accompanied her partner who was receiving treatment, said: "The locum first ignored my introduction as 'partner' and continued to call me 'friend' for the rest of the session."

Another contributor said: "(The receptionist) refused to put down my partner's name and partner/next of kin, kept saying 'I'll just put friend', I said, no, I want you to put partner and she looked at me all lips pursed

and said, 'I'll just put friend'."

The study also highlighted a surprising level of ignorance amongst healthcare staff. Another person quoted in the study said: "I was scheduled for a small bit of surgery and was asked to give a pregnancy test. I pointed out that I was not only a gay woman but also post-op male-to-female trans. The reply was 'Well, best to be sure'".

Lead author Catherine Meads, Professor of Health at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), said: "Many healthcare staff do not feel they need to know about their patients' sexuality. However, our research uncovered a worrying lack of knowledge of the issues, unfairness, negativity, and blatant discrimination.

"These studies found significant barriers to sexual minority women, highlighting the need for explicit and consistent education for [healthcare professionals](#) on the issues facing these women.

"This is the first review of its kind focusing purely on the experiences of sexual minority [women](#) and [healthcare](#) in the UK, drawing on 26 different studies."

More information: Meads et al, A Systematic Review of Sexual Minority Women's Experiences of Health Care in the UK, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2019). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph16173032](#)

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

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