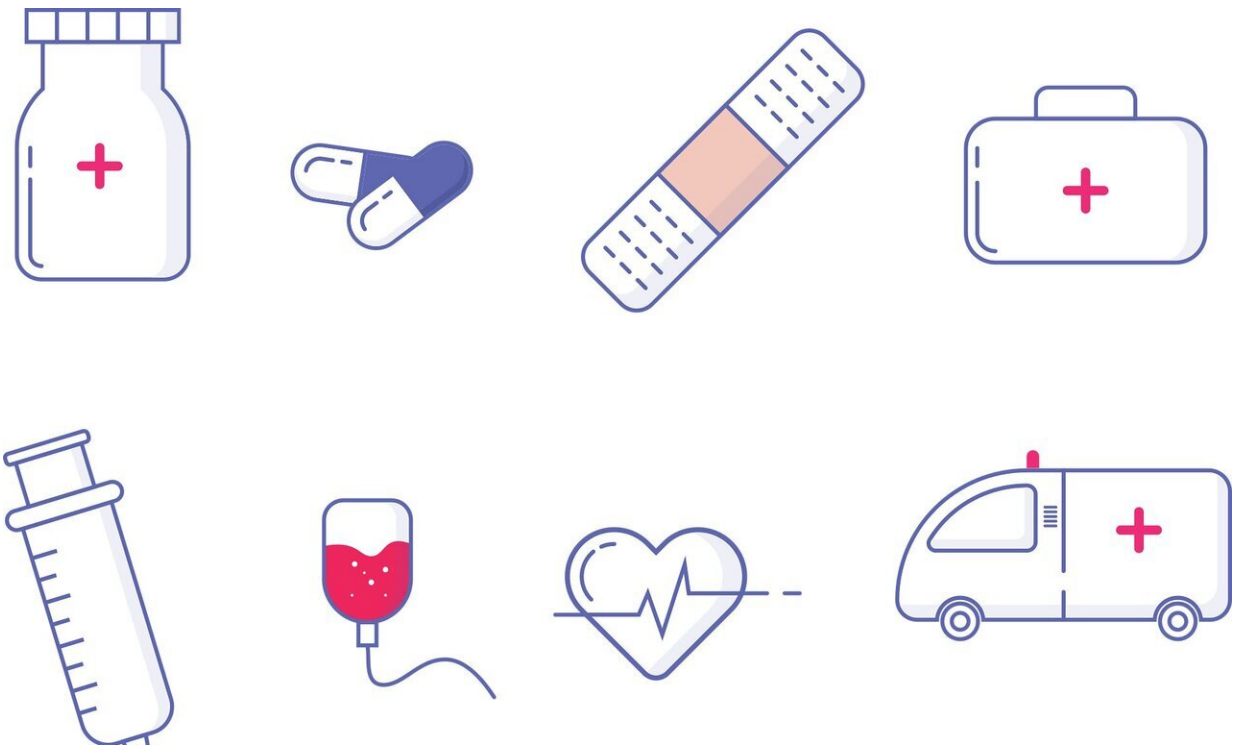


Report outlines how to improve healthcare access for sex workers

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Sex workers face discrimination within healthcare settings that limit their access to safe care. Researchers at the University of Illinois Chicago's College of Nursing have recently published a paper demonstrating how patient-centered care for sex workers could be implemented.

"Feeling Safe, Feeling Seen, Feeling Free: Combating stigma and creating culturally safe care for sex workers in Chicago" was published in *PLOS ONE*.

According to the paper's authors, the project was designed to inform how communities may develop "empowerment interventions for sex workers by understanding their self-management, [health promotion](#) and harm reduction needs."

Researchers conducted and analyzed in-depth interviews with sex workers in Chicago. Many participants reported they did not receive care that was respectful or culturally responsive. Barriers to care included stigmatizing and culturally unsafe experiences with [healthcare providers](#), and the prohibitive cost of healthcare.

Interview participants reported developing strategies to identify sex worker-safe care providers, creating false self-narratives and health histories in order to safely access care, and creating self-care routines, such as yoga, meditation, that serve as alternatives to primary care.

"Our findings demonstrate how patient-centered care for [sex-workers](#) in Chicago might include holistic wellness exercises, accessible pay scales for services, and destigmatizing healthcare praxis," the study stated.

The study also calls for a focus on culturally safe healthcare. For example, the study acknowledges that [patients](#) are experts in themselves, and providers must follow the lead of the patient rather than asking invasive, ignorantly curious, or unnecessary questions. The study states that "ongoing provider training and inbuilt, systemic responsivity to patient needs and contexts is crucial to patient-centered care."

The study's contributors include Randi Beth Singer, Natasha Crooks, Phoenix Matthews and Crystal Patil of the UIC College of Nursing.

More information: Randi Beth Singer et al, "Feeling Safe, Feeling Seen, Feeling Free": Combating stigma and creating culturally safe care for sex workers in Chicago, *PLOS ONE* (2021). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0253749](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0253749)

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