

Significant reduction in depression, suicidality in youth receiving gender-affirming care or puberty blockers: study

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Researchers found a 60% decrease in moderate and severe depression and 73% decrease in suicidality among transgender and non-binary youth who received puberty blockers or gender-affirming hormones over a 12-month period, according to a study abstract presented during the virtual American Academy of Pediatrics 2021 National Conference & Exhibition.

The prospective study included 104 transgender and non-binary [youth](#) ages 13-21 who received treatment at the Seattle Children's Gender Clinic, which serves a five-state area, between August 2017 and June 2018. While gender-affirming care is associated with reduced long-term adverse mental health outcomes, the authors sought to measure short-term outcomes of gender-affirming care.

"Our study adds to a robust evidence-base that access to puberty blockers and hormones is critical for ensuring the well-being of transgender and non-binary young people," said Diana Tordoff, MPH; Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Washington Department of Epidemiology.

Transgender and non-binary youth experience high rates of poor mental health outcomes due to lack of social support and anti-transgender stigma. There continues to be limited access to gender-affirming medical care and an increase in anti-transgender legislation across the country,

which causes poor mental health in these youth, according to the authors.

"Unfortunately, multidisciplinary clinics are not accessible to all transgender and non-binary youth. Next, we need to understand how to better serve youth who are not able to make it into a clinical environment." said co-senior author Kym Ahrens MD MPH, associate professor of pediatrics at Seattle Children's Hospital, University of Washington, School of Medicine.

Researchers surveyed youth at baseline, 3, 6, and 12 months to assess levels of depression, generalized anxiety and suicidality. They observed a 60% decrease in depression and a 73% decrease in suicidality associated with receipt of gender-affirming hormones or puberty blockers. There were no changes in anxiety noted at each of the time points evaluated.

"Our data supports what we see clinically, an amazing transformation in these young people and includes better mental health, said co-senior author David Inwards-Breland, professor of pediatrics at Rady Children's Hospital-San Diego and University of California San Diego School of Medicine. "Yet, access to gender-affirming [medical care](#) is in jeopardy with the rise in anti-transgender legislation and threatens the youth's mental [health](#) and the providers who serve them."

This research was funded by Seattle Children's Center for Diversity and Health Equity and the Pacific Hospital Preservation Development Authority.

Dr. Inwards-Breland will present the study abstract at 3:38PM, Monday, October 11, 2021.

More information: Abstract Title: Mental Health Outcomes and Receipt of Gender-Affirming Care

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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