

## CREATING INCLUSIVE AND AFFIRMING ENVIRONMENTS FOR SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITY PATIENTS

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### Abstract

Individuals' health and healthcare needs are multifaceted. Radiographers and other healthcare practitioners therefore have to consider a variety of social dynamics, identities, and person- and context-related factors that may shape patients' perspectives about health and their lived realities in healthcare settings. This also holds true for sexual and gender minority (SGM) patients given the heterogeneity of this patient populace. Importantly, the heteronormative, cisgendered ideology, underpinning contemporary healthcare system designs and service delivery, results in negative health outcomes for SGM patients. This patient populace also faces abuse, discrimination, disrespect and undignified healthcare services, globally. The consequence of this is that SGM patients delay and avoid going to healthcare settings due to fear of (re-)traumatisation and poor service delivery which decreases their quality of life, leads to later diagnosis of serious ailments. Radiographers have an ethico-legal duty to treat all patients with respect and dignity so as to promote their wellbeing. This requires radiographers to create inclusive and affirming environments and practices when caring for SGM patients.

An integrative literature review was conducted in 2020 to establish the strategies that can be utilised to create inclusive healthcare environments for SGM patients and radiographers. The strategies revolved around: education, inclusive language practices, and creating a sense of belonging through physical artefacts.

The aim of this presentation is to provide practical strategies that can be used to cultivate healthcare environments that are inclusive and affirming for SGM patients with a focus on the above three identified themes. The premise of the argument is from a social justice, human rights and scope of practice perspective. The presentation also is a call to action for more research and practice and policy change given the status quo of the current healthcare system and limited focus on SGM healthcare needs and care provision South African curricula.

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