



Gender Diversity Cultural Safety

While Pride season looks a little different this year, the vibrancy and strength of 2SLGBTQ+ communities across BC is undeniable. Dental hygienists are reminded of their responsibility to create a welcoming and safe environment for 2SLGBTQ+ clients. Homophobia, transphobia, and discrimination are still pervasive within British Columbia and the health care system in particular.

A June 2019 report by the Standing Committee on Health found that up to 60% of 2SLGBTQ+ people do not talk to their health care providers about their sexual orientation or gender identity, while those that do often need to educate health professionals about their risk factors or health needs. Moreover, the report cited incidents of health care workers refusing to treat people belonging to sexual or gender minorities because they do not feel that they are sufficiently trained – which can lengthen the time it takes for 2SLGBTQ+ people to access care.

2SLGBTQ+ people may also experience other forms of stigma and discrimination in health care – such as racism, sexism, economic disadvantage, or other factors – alongside homophobia or transphobia, that negatively impact their ability to access health care services. This is known as “intersectionality” and refers to how multiple concurrent and ongoing types of bias influence and amplify one another (i.e. racism, sexism, anti-trans bias). For example, a transgender person might experience transphobia as a barrier to care, while a racialized and disabled transgender person might experience racism, disability discrimination and transphobia as a more complex interlocking system of barriers. It is at the intersection of various social worlds where barriers to care become enhanced and made more complex.

Dental hygienists in BC have a [Duty to Provide Care](#) in a culturally safe, humble and non-discriminatory manner. While recognizing the negative impact that stigma and discrimination have on the health care system, health care providers can help ensure a safe space for health care services by:

- Familiarizing oneself with the 2SLGBTQ+ community terms,
- Gaining deeper understanding of how 2SLGBTQ+ stereotypes and discrimination can impact client safety,
- Identifying ways to create a welcoming and safe health care services environment, and
- Committing to continued learning.

Explore the above points and further learning on this topic by reviewing the following resources and completing the following training:

- [The Health of LGBTQIA2 Communities in Canada – Report of the Standing Committee on Health](#)
- [2020-07 Exploring Gender Diversity – Provincial Health Services Authority](#)
- [Trans Basics – Provincial Health Services Authority](#)
- [Primary Care Resources – Provincial Health Services Authority](#)

When BC dental hygienists commit to creating safe and welcoming oral health care spaces for all British Columbians, this enhances the safety of the public by reducing barriers to care.