

# LGBTQ+ Barriers in Physical Therapy: The Clinician's Perspective

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**Purpose/Hypothesis:** This study qualitatively describes barriers to cultural competence/humility of LGBTQ+ healthcare in physical therapy (PT). Because the LGBTQ+ community experiences health-related disparities,<sup>1-4</sup> the researchers sought understanding of LGBTQ+ cultural competence/humility from the PT clinician's perspective.<sup>5-8</sup>

**Subjects:** Eighty-eight PT clinicians were nationally recruited using convenience sampling from two DPT clinical affiliation lists and additional clinicians.

**Materials/Methods:** A qualitative case study approach was utilized. Semi-structured group and individual interviews, guided by literature-based questions, were conducted.<sup>6,8-14</sup> To determine emerging themes, data collection and analysis utilized a constant comparative process to achieve saturation.

**Results:** The primary themes stemming from deficiencies in cultural competence/humility uncovered by qualitative inquiry included: *Acceptance, Advocacy, Awareness, Competency, Experience, Explicit Bias, Policy and Psychological Stress*.

**Conclusions:** The *Acceptance* theme identified a sensitivity to LGBTQ+ needs, but then failed to communicate adequate cultural competence.<sup>5-8</sup> The *Awareness* theme referred to clinicians' implicit biases.<sup>10,11</sup> *Advocacy and Experience* themes emerged as factors for PT management and advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community. A *Competency* theme centered around the lack of cultural knowledge and skill.<sup>12-15</sup> The *Explicit Bias* theme highlighted personal, political and regional beliefs.<sup>10,11</sup> A *Policy* theme identified the role of policies impacting LGBTQ+ patient PT access.<sup>16</sup> Finally, a *Psychological Stress* theme highlighted PT clinicians' fear, avoidance and internal conflict in working with LGBTQ+ patients.

**Clinical Relevance:** There is no research to date surrounding LGBTQ+ cultural competency/humility in solely the physical therapy discipline. This research discusses the barriers to cultural competence from the PT clinician's perspective and will direct future educational resources and programs.

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