Placing Pride in Medical Education

Keywords: Curriculum Development, LGBT, EDI

Author: Dr Jacqui Clifford, Prof Seamus Sreenan
RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences

RCSI UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

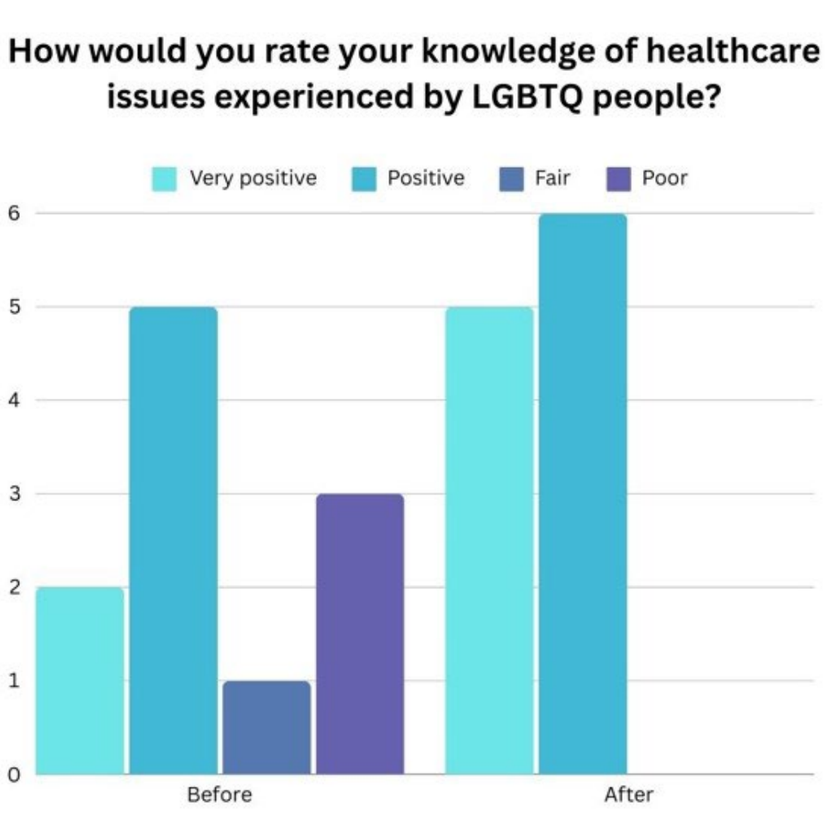
Introduction

Although LGBT people experience disparities in accessing health care and are more susceptible to a broad range of medical conditions, medical curricula, including that of RCSI, traditionally incorporate few, if any, learning opportunities to educate students about LGBT healthcare. Lack of health care professional knowledge of their health needs is identified by LGBT people as one of the key contributors to disparities in their health care. This lack of education around LGBT health was identified by students in the graduate entry medicine programme year 1 as a quality gap in their curriculum

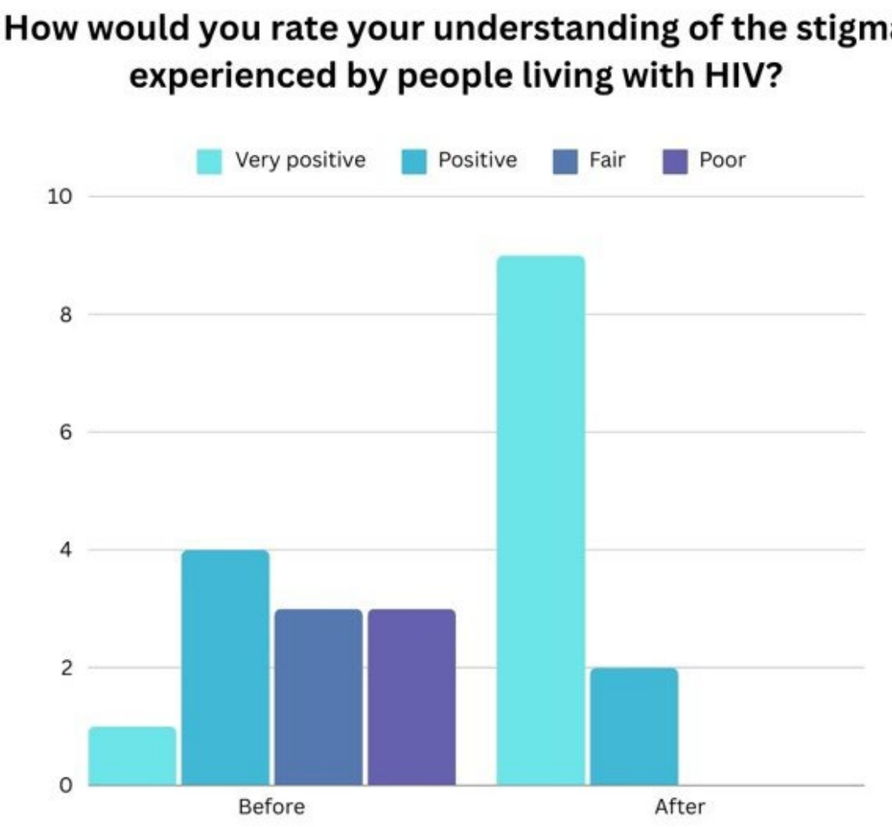
Initiative

To address this gap, a student choice module focusing on LGBT health, designed in collaboration with a direct entry student (a member of the Pride society at RCSI) was offered to the first year of the graduate entry medicine class at RCSI. The aim was to deliver teaching to a small group incorporating a mix of informal lectures, technology-enhanced, experiential and self-directed learning. The module was developed in collaboration with the RCSI Pride society, a colleague from the school of social work and social policy at Trinity College Dublin (who also contributed to the module), the clinical lead of the national gender service and the physician from the gay men's health service. Learning opportunities in the module included rainbow badge training provided by the Pride society, talks on theoretical aspects of human sexuality, the history of the gay community's response to the emergence of HIV in the 1980s in Ireland, the delivery of care to the trans community from the perspective of the clinical lead and a session on sexual history taking with an emphasis on sensitivity and appropriate approach to questioning.

Students were also provided with the opportunity to view the RISE project on the subject of stigma experienced by people living with HIV, an opportunity to take a sexual history from a simulated patient and to reflect on their patient interaction, and self-directed learning with suggested reading. Students answered quiz questions in an anonymous fashion at the beginning and end of the week to assess their knowledge around health needs of LGBT people, disparities experienced by the community, knowledge about HIV and comfort with discussions around sexuality. At the end of the week, students were asked to write a short reflection on how they would be advocates for better LGBT health based on their experience of the module.



Student's knowledge of Healthcare issues experienced by LGBTQ people before and after the module



Student's understanding of stigma experienced by people living with HIV before and after the module

Outcome

All students in the class were offered participation in the module as one of 6 choice options. Eleven of 88 students were assigned to the module, of which for 3 students it was their first choice. Teaching was successfully delivered with face-to-face time and self-directed learning time each day over one week. Based on the anonymous survey performed at the beginning and end of the week there was significantly improved student understanding of health needs of LGBT people, of specific health needs of the trans community, of disparities and barriers faced by LGBT people in healthcare settings, improved knowledge regarding the transmission, prevention and treatment of HIV, improved understanding of the stigma experienced by people living with HIV and improved student comfort in discussing sexuality and sexual history. Students had the opportunity to provide qualitative feedback through their reflections which were generally positive. It was clear students, both those who identified as members of the LGBT community and those who indicated that they did not, benefitted from the module. A comment from one student that reflected common qualitative themes was as follows:

"*Although I am not myself a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I can make myself a visible advocate through signage, statements, and advocacy work. I really appreciated being able to learn more this week from healthcare providers trailblazing a path for LGBTQ+ healthcare and hope to continue to learn from LGBTQ+ providers and allies*."

In summary, this innovative student choice educational opportunity demonstrates that medical students' knowledge of LGBT people's health needs and comfort in discussing them, which are essential to improving the quality of health outcomes for this minority group, can be improved by dedicated teaching on the subject. The next step in the development of this teaching is to partner with students as part of a student engagement project to further enhance the learning opportunities for students on the subject of LGBTQ+ health and to scale the teaching to provide it to all RCSI students.