

# **Nonbinary patients deserve better care.**

How health care providers can  
care for patients with  
nonbinary gender identities



Researchers at UCSF created focus groups to understand commonalities across health care experiences of nonbinary patients.

The study included **focus groups** with **24** nonbinary adults nationally. All facilitators and the study lead identified as nonbinary.

Of all participants:



were Black, Indigenous,  
and People of Color  
(BIPOC)



had a chronic  
health condition or  
disability



were English  
speaking and >18  
years old

“

There were so many different pronouns in use in my medical records. They never asked, so they kind of guessed.

-Study Participant

”

Many clinics **misgender** patients in person, in written communications, and in electronic health records.

“ There’s no way to put a preferred name or even pronouns or gender. My doctor put in my record that I had Gender Identity Disorder, as a way to mark me as trans. It was very disconcerting.  
-Study Participant ”

Many nonbinary patients feel **pathologized** and find their **gender identity is placed on the "problem list"** as opposed to being affirmed and validated.

“As a disabled Black person, one of the main reasons why I can't correct providers, why I don't feel comfortable doing so, is because I don't want to be seen as angry or violent, or non-compliant.  
-Study Participant”

Many nonbinary patients **do not feel safe to self-advocate** or correct providers who invalidate their gender identity - **particularly patients who are disabled or BIPOC.**

# ***RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROVIDERS***

- **Ask every patient** their gender identity and pronouns
- **Use the correct name and pronouns** for patients in their **medical records**
- **Be open to corrections**
- **Advocate** for documentation and care to be affirming of nonbinary patients
- **Share** this resource and others with providers in your circle of influence

# ***RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HEALTH SYSTEMS***

- Include curriculum on nonbinary patients in health professions training
- Signal alliance with the trans community
- Create electronic systems with non-pathologizing documentation of gender identity
- Diversify provider pool to include nonbinary providers, especially BIPOC providers

# Conclusions

Gender affirming practices and infrastructure are largely missing from the American healthcare system.

The lack of support from clinics and providers toward nonbinary patients is invalidating and ostracizing.

Allowing nonbinary patients to feel safe in clinical spaces requires active allyship on the level of providers, universities, and health systems.

Bindman J, Ngo A, Zamudio-Haas S, Sevelius J (2021)  
Health care experiences of patients with nonbinary gender identities,  
Transgender Health, DOI: 10.1089/trgh.2021.0029

