

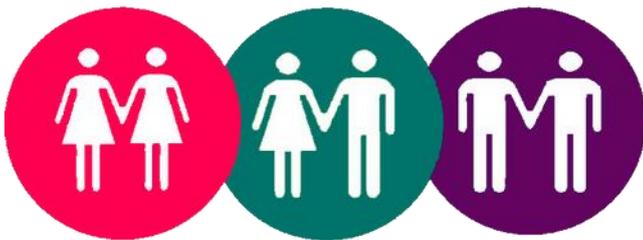
LGBTQ+ History Month

Progress made in LGBTQ+ Sexual Healthcare

By Dr Dush Mital, sexual health consultant at MKUH.

In my initial years as a medical doctor of close to 30 years, I have witnessed people of the LGBTQ+ community facing much adversity in accessing, receiving and delivering of favourable outcomes of physical and mental healthcare in all areas and disciplines. As a Specialist in Sexual Health and HIV Medicine for the past 25+ years however, great strides have been made in these areas in this particular discipline. I am pleased that the LGBTQ+ History Month is highlighting some of these issues of the progress made.

Sexual Health Clinics have rightly emerged as a serious and specialised discipline dealing with complex issues of this cohort. The emergence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the 1980s gave particular emphasis to develop Sexual Health and HIV services within their own rights. Public Health concerns highlighted this further. The importance of providing regular care providers to regular users greatly improved healthcare outcomes and this was initially matched by funding and staffing investments. Specialised services eg Transgender Clinics have mushroomed in the past few years and complex medical, psychological and social issues were taken forward in the face of difficult political and cultural backgrounds. Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) were created for these discussions in designated centres where population numbers are high. Coupled with the use of online and teleconsultation technologies, this proved particularly valuable in the often stressful and onerous background of the COVID-19 pandemic.



As gay, bisexual and transgender individuals are more likely to encounter sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and psychosexual issues eg erectile dysfunction, gender identification, it is important that integrated sexual health services are easily accessible, welcoming and offer support to all LGBTQ+ in a friendly and non-discriminatory way. I feel we as providers have come a long way this century and continue to evolve in this manner and at the very least, offer signposting and onward referrals to more specialised services. LGBTQ+ peer review services are of crucial importance to both users and providers and this is further 'means' tested by regular qualitative surveys and subsequent feedback given. Research and Development coupled with educational and training development needs of students, trainees and healthcare providers complements this in a crucial manner too. Designated support groups and specific charities eg THT further offers support and care to not just members of the LGBTQ+ community, but to friends and family members too.