



Health Care for Lesbians and Gay Men: Confronting Homophobia and Heterosexism

K Jean Peterson

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Health Care for Lesbians and Gay Men educates practitioners about the special needs of gay and lesbian patients and how to look critically at the impact of homophobia and heterosexism on the provision of care. It provides an overview of critical health care issues for lesbians and gay men and offers concrete suggestions to health practitioners and social workers on how to address these issues in order to guarantee the best care for their patients and clients. Authors in Health Care for Lesbians and Gay Men give health care providers and mental health workers practical interventions; suggestions for advocacy, social change, grassroots efforts, and alternative programs; and lessons about how to use existing procedures to more effectively meet the unique health care needs of gays and lesbians. Practitioners also learn how to utilize legal action in securing and protecting patients' and clients' personal health care wishes. Chapters in this book cover:

- how homophobia and negative attitudes can directly compromise the care given to lesbians and gay men.
 - heterosexism and biases which exclude the partners of gay men and lesbians from participating in the care of their loved ones.
 - legal issues and the need for legal recognition of gay and lesbian relationships, both to enhance the provision of care and for financial access to health care presently available to only heterosexual, married couples.
 - legal protection and special legal documents that ensure that the wishes of gay men and lesbians are honored and the integrity of their relationships not violated.
- Health Care for Lesbians and Gay Men starts with special issues confronting adolescents and the special role health care providers can play in supporting the struggles of lesbian and gay adolescents. It then continues to look at these issues over the life cycle. Three themes emerge as authors try to explain problems and possible solutions for lesbians and gay men seeking health care: the pervasive homophobia and heterosexism found throughout the health care system and the impact these attitudes and beliefs have on the health care of lesbians and gay men; the need for education in professional programs on special health issues of gay men and lesbians; and the critical role that social workers can play in both educating others about the special needs of their gay and lesbian clients and in advocating for their clients in various health care settings. Health Care for Lesbians and Gay Men is essential reading for social work and social service practitioners and students working in the health care field, advanced undergraduates and graduate students of social work, professionals and students of nursing and medicine, and others concerned with the quality and equality of health care services. It urges students and professionals to challenge and evaluate their own attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in order to ensure quality services to all clients and patients.

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