



Research Snapshot



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Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS
at Yale University

Transgender Stigma and Health: A Critical Review of Stigma Determinants, Mechanisms, and Interventions

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What is the research about?

In the US, transgender people, with an assigned birth sex that differs from their gender identity or expression, experience widespread prejudice, discrimination, violence, and other forms of stigma. Emerging evidence suggests that stigma makes transgender people vulnerable to stress and subsequent mental and physical health problems.

Why is this important for HIV prevention and treatment?

Stigma restricts access to social and economic resources, placing some transgender individuals at risk for engaging in HIV risk behavior such as sex work for income or substance use to cope with mistreatment. Stigma has also been linked to poor mental health which can impact an individual's self-efficacy to engage in primary (e.g. condom use) or secondary (e.g. medication adherence) HIV prevention strategies.

What did the researchers do?

This critical review synthesizes the literature on transgender stigma at the multiple levels it operates to influence the health of transgender people. The review then summarizes interventions targeting transgender stigma at multiple levels and concludes by outlining a research agenda to understand and reduce stigma toward this marginalized segment of the US population.

What did the researchers find?

Transgender stigma limits access to resources in a number of critical domains (e.g., employment, healthcare), persistently affecting the physical and mental health of transgender people. The applied social ecological model employed here elucidates that transgender stigma operates at the individual, interpersonal, and structural-level to impact health. Transgender stigma prevention and coping interventions hold promise for reducing stigma and

its adverse health effects.

How can you use this research?

This review paves a path for a transgender health research agenda that includes further examination of stigma determinants, mechanisms, and moderators. Healthcare providers, policymakers, and public health professionals should work together to develop multi-level interventions to concurrently address individual, interpersonal, and structural forms of transgender stigma.

Original Research Article:

White Hughto, J. M., Reisner, S. L., & Pachankis, J. E. (2015). *Transgender stigma and health: A critical review of stigma determinants, mechanisms, and interventions*. *Social Science & Medicine*, 147(12), 222-231. [PubMed](#)

Grant Support:

Dr. White Hughto's research is supported by National Institute of Mental Health Grant Nos. T32MH020031 and P30MH062294.