



ASSOC PROFESSOR STEPHEN STATHIS

Medical Director Child and Youth Mental Health Service, Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service (CHQ HHS)



OLIVIA DONAGHY

Team Leader, Lady Cilento Children's Hospital (LCCH) Gender Clinic and Statewide Service

Developing a Statewide Child and Adolescent Gender Clinic

The Importance of Patient, Parent/Carer and Community Engagement.

Increasing visibility and social acceptance of gender diversity in Australia means more children and adolescents are presenting to specialist healthcare services seeking gender affirming psychological and medical treatment. Queensland's Department of Health prioritised the needs of this vulnerable population in the 2016 Mental Health Connecting Care to Recovery Plan and Sexual Health Strategy with recurrent funding to establish the first statewide paediatric service in 2017.

The aim of the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital (LCCH) Gender Clinic and Statewide Service is to optimise the mental health, wellbeing and function of Queensland children and young people experiencing challenges in the area of gender identity through coordinated, family focused, multidisciplinary assessment and care. As the statewide hub for paediatric gender healthcare, the Service works to promote wellbeing through adopting internationally recognised practice guidelines and focusing on the strong protective impact of parental support in mental health outcomes in this population.

The TransPathways study of youth and their parents living in Australia reported high rates of co-occurring mental illness in Transgender young people including depression (74%), anxiety (72%), high rates of self-harm (79%) and attempted suicide (48%). Suicidal thoughts and behaviours are high due to body dysphoria and a culmination of experiences of transphobia, abuse, exclusion or prejudice together with common life stressors experienced by all young people. (Strauss et al, 2017). Increasing evidence demonstrates that

with timely, specialist gender affirming care during childhood and adolescence, harms can be ameliorated and mental health and wellbeing outcomes can be significantly improved (Hidalgo et al, 2013).

Since its commencement, the Service's reach has exceeded expectations. Despite a 126% growth in referrals, specialist outpatient waiting times have been reduced from over 17 months to 3 months for adolescents. Young people previously waiting over a year for an initial appointment, and who may have developed irreversible secondary sex characteristics, now have access to timely treatment. Given the Service also identifies and treats co-occurring mental illness, such interventions have also contributed to a reduction in mental health morbidity in this vulnerable population.

Patient safety and quality is a key commitment of the Children's health Queensland Hospital and Health Service (CHQ HHS) and the development of the Service provided the opportunity to put into practice key principles that underpin safe, timely, effective and appropriate patient centred care.

The meaningful inclusion of the voice of transgender children and their parents/carers has been critical in the evolution of the Service. A Trans community development worker was engaged for a three-month community consultation project to form focus groups with parents of gender diverse children and young people on the model for the Service. Consultation also occurred with community paediatric transgender interest group of general practitioners, community health

workers and Transgender advocates. This resulted in a short video to inform pathways to care and help reduce anxiety for new families on our website. At the Service's inception, patients wrote interview questions and sat on interview panels in staff recruitment.

The Service's success in patient engagement has led to meaningful partnerships from the service's inception, and the evolution of a diverse range of projects, support groups and advisory roles, as well as direct engagement in the way that clinical services are delivered. A bi-monthly Parents' Support Group uses teleconferencing to reach rural and regional parents across Queensland. The group creates opportunities for social and emotional support and connection amongst families, helping to enhance the health outcomes for their children. Ongoing community partnerships has therefore enabled the Service to have greater reach and impact on reducing social determinants of health such as social isolation, discrimination and familial attunement.

There is limited published evidence regarding the efficacy, safety, and quality of life impact of gender-affirming treatment in adolescence. To evaluate effectiveness in achieving better health and life outcomes, measurements of improved health outcomes has been integrated into all assessment and treatment protocols since the Service commenced.

The Gender Mapping Study (GeMS) seeks to longitudinally follow children and adolescents treated at the LCCH Gender Clinic & Statewide Service, and has collaborated with other Australian gender clinics with a view to a national cohort study. This study will document the characteristics of gender diverse young people, and report on psychosocial wellbeing and endocrine care delivered within the Service with internationally recognised psychometric measures derived from synthesis of best practice international guidelines. The study was established following consumer consultation, to ensure respectful and ethical use of data and exploration of research questions which are relevant and meaningful people who identify as Transgender.

References:

Strauss, P., Cook, A., Winter, S., Watson, V., Wright Toussaint, D., Lin, A. (2017). Trans Pathways: the mental health experiences and care pathways of trans young people. Summary of results. Telethon Kids Institute, Perth, Australia

Hidalgo M, A, Ehrensaft D, Tishelman A, C, Clark L, F, Garofalo R, Rosenthal S, M, Spack N, P, Olson J, The Gender Affirmative Model: What We Know and What We Aim to Learn. Human Development (2013) 56:285-290

The Lady Cilento Children's Hospital Gender Clinic & Statewide Service is a finalist in the International Hospital Federation / Austco Excellence Award for Quality & Safety and Patient-centred Care. The awards will be announced at 3:15pm on Wednesday 10 October 2018 during day 1 of the World Hospital Congress.

www.hospitalcongress2018.com



2018 IHF BRISBANE
42nd World Hospital Congress
10-12 OCTOBER 2018 BRISBANE AUSTRALIA