

Community health, Talcahuano's Health Service experience in trans health

Salud comunitaria, la experiencia de salud trans en el Servicio de Salud Talcahuano, Chile

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Background

Even though the Chilean law states the need for quality health care for every citizen, this is not guaranteed for trans people. However, positive experiences do exist, as is the experience of the trans community work with Talcahuano's Health Service. This work between health institution and community is regarded as relevant and pioneer in Chile.

Aims

The general aim of this investigation was to describe the work of Talcahuano's Health Service's Trans Participation Roundtable. Specific aims were to know the experiences of community members of this Participation Roundtable, and to know the experiences of professional members of this Participation Roundtable, both clinical and from the Department of Social Participation, User Satisfaction and Communications.

Method & procedures

This investigation used a qualitative approach based on Grounded Theory approach. Thus, data recollection was done through semi-structured interviews with professionals and community members of Talcahuano's Health Service's Trans Roundtable. As each group has different personal interests, two interview guidelines were designed, one to interview community members, and a second one to interview professional members. In every case, informed consent process was of utmost importance. All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Those transcripts were codified, and these codes were grouped into categories, which were linked together, to generate the final conclusions. These were later presented to both professional and community members of the Trans Roundtable, in two separate instances, to validate the conclusions.

Results & discussion

A total of eight interviews were done, four to community members of Talcahuano's Health Service's Trans Roundtable, in convenient locations for them; and four to professional members, in their workplace, to facilitate their participation in this research. Two main categories were identified, which are the "Need for depathologization and good treatment" and "Dialogue and Social Participation". The former has four main themes as background, which are the resistance from health professionals to open up to LGBT+ health issues; the general misinformation on health needs of the trans population; discrimination; and invisibilization. Thus, the "Need for depathologization and good treatment" is recognized both by community and professional members of the Trans Roundtable, and is crucial on how health treatment should be delivered to the trans community. However, to this date, health treatment usually doesn't consider this perspective. The second main category is "Dialogue and social Participation". This originates on Trans' people activism and empowerment; the openness of Talcahuano's Health Service's professionals to learn about LGBT+ health issues; and Chilean legislation. "Dialogue and social Participation" appears as an important commitment between both professional and community members of the Trans Roundtable, which is facilitated through headships support, and allows Trans people's needs to be answered by the institution. As a consequence of this Dialogue, there is a considerable learning process from both community and professional members of the Trans Roundtable; the Roundtable activities are binding and active; and there are positive and close relationships between everyone involved in the Roundtable. From all of the above, is possible

to sum up that the collaborative work between community and institution, the commitment of the professionals and the community members, and the support of headships are key to address the needs of the local trans community. Through dialogue and social participation, both community and professional members of the Trans Roundtable have gained new useful knowledge being part of different activities, making constructive relationships between the Roundtable participants.

Conclusion

Health professionals' academic background does not include LGBT+ topics, which is why most of them lack the knowledge to provide good treatment to the LGBT+ community. Professionals from Talcahuano's Health Service acknowledged this, and decided to work with the Trans community, to provide better care. Healthcare for trans people must be empathic and refrain itself from treating trans people as carriers of an illness which must be cured. This will guarantee trans people the possibility for the transition they want. Finally, cooperation amongst Talcahuano's Health Service and the local Trans Community must be replicated in other health services of our country, in order to guarantee quality health care for trans people, no matter where they live in Chile.

Keywords: community health, LGBT+, LGBT+ health, social participation, trans, trans health

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