

Review

A Review of “Manual de Curso Conceptos LGBTQIA+: Desde un Enfoque Afirmativo y Garante de Derechos”

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Several legislative actions have been taken in the past decade in Chile that have sought to stop the violations against people of the LGBTQIA+¹ community. Some of these initiatives were even

incorporated in the proposal for a new Chilean Constitution, establishing, among other things, that the Chilean State "recognizes and promotes a society in which women, men, and gender non-conforming individuals participate in fundamentally equal conditions, acknowledging that their effective representation in the democratic process is the minimum principle and condition for a full and significant exercise of democracy and citizenship". The proposal was unfortunately rejected by the citizens in a referendum held in September 2022. Despite the progress made in legal, educational, and health matters, there is still a long way to go for our society and culture to be sensitive to these issues and respect the established agreements and norms. This is particularly reflected in the deficiencies that exist in health care regarding the access, treatment, quality, dignity, etc. of people from the LGBTQIA+ community (González Díaz & Pantoja de Prada, 2021). In this context, the Department of Gender and Health of the Chilean Medical Association (*Colegio Médico de Chile*, or COLMED) launched the course *Conceptos LGBTQIA+: Desde un enfoque afirmativo y garante de derechos* [LGBTQIA+ Concepts: From an Affirmative and Rights-Guaranteeing Approach].

This course, carried out in the context of the commemoration of Pride Month, was designed to integrate the perspective of gender dissident activists, as well as of health professionals with extensive training and experience in gender issues and the barriers that gender-diverse people encounter in health care, and many of whom are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. It offered 22 certified hours distributed in 4 modules, in an asynchronous

virtual modality, and was held between June and August 2021. The course was aimed at any person interested in gender diversity issues, with a special emphasis on health care for this population.

Based on the experience of the course, the Gender and Health Department of COLMED published the Course Manual, a compilation of the transcripts of each lecture included in the training. This manual was published to disseminate the contents and simultaneously contribute to a respectful and critical dialogue on topics that are relevant for developing inclusive and affirmative healthcare spaces for the LGBTQIA+ community. Furthermore, it aims at promoting the formation of healthcare teams that are better trained in gender and gender diversity issues.

As for its structure, following the thematic organization of the course, the manual is divided into four main modules which, in turn, include different chapters corresponding to each of the lectures of the course. The lecturer is introduced at the beginning of each chapter, including their name, gender pronouns, photograph, and a brief biography. This allows us to get closer to each speaker and to know the context and experiences from which they offer their reflections and contents. This, more than a gesture towards the LGBTQIA+ community, can be interpreted as a conscious political action that makes voices that have been historically silenced visible. Additionally, as it is mentioned in the manual, each speaker was given full freedom for the preparation of their lecture, which ensured a diverse space in terms of worldview, language, stance, format, and pedagogical strategies. This contributed to creativity and free expression and, therefore, created an environment that was coherent with the topics of respect and empathy towards gender diversity. It is worth mentioning the special care taken to maintain neutral, inclusive, and friendly language throughout the transcripts, as well as the graphic details incorporated throughout the manual.

Each chapter includes a glossary of relevant concepts and/or a roadmap to guide the reader through the contents and the sequence in which they are presented. At the end of each chapter, there is a brief test with short answer questions for the reader to self-monitor their understanding of the contents; the correct answers are included at the end of the manual. All of the above is of significant help when facing content that may be foreign to the experience of cis-heteronormativity.

Concerning the contents, the first module is entitled "Introduction to LGBTQIA+ Theory" and incorporates the topics "Basic Concepts I and II", "LGBTQIA+ World and National History", and "Current Scenario of the LGBTQIA+ Community". These topics lay the foundations for those reading this manual to become

familiar with the various terminologies and concepts related to the LGBTQIA+ community. Moreover, the review of issues like intersectionality and gender stereotypes allows people whose experiences have been embedded in cis-heteronormativity to understand the dichotomy of privilege and oppression and, therefore, reflect more deeply and critically on the inequalities that have historically contributed to violence, discrimination, exclusion, precariousness, and the marginalization of the LGBTQIA+ community. This module concludes by analyzing the current scenario of this community regarding human rights, exploring legislative aspects and Chilean public policies.

The second module, entitled "Tools and Key Concepts in health care", reviews aspects of health care for gender dissident people, indicating the deficiencies, barriers, discrimination, and rights violations to which this community is exposed. Some of the ideas reviewed in the first module are reiterated in this analysis, which allows reinforcing and further understanding how the privilege-oppression dichotomy arises in health care, where cis-heteronormative sociocultural constructs favor the violation of rights. Moreover, this module delves into issues like affective life, as well as the sexual, reproductive, and mental health of gender non-conforming individuals, the healthcare environment that historically pathologizes them, and the challenges around depathologization. It is noteworthy that this module includes a chapter addressing the development of LGBTQIA+ identities throughout the life course, as well as the barriers associated with it.

As stated in its title, the third module ("Diversity from a comprehensive scenario") analyzes gender diversity from a holistic perspective, incorporating reflections on the arts, culture, biology, and law. This offers the readers a more rounded conception of wellbeing in health care. Along the same line, it includes topics related to the analysis of bodies and functional diversity that exist in the LGBTQIA+ community. Furthermore, this chapter analyzes the relationship between colonialism, the construction of gender, and the violation of the rights of racialized people who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The fourth and last module, named "Advanced Concepts", delves into sexual, affective, and gender experiences that have been historically less visible, such as aromanticism, polyamory, pansexuality, asexuality, and non-binary identities, among others. In addition, it includes a chapter that addresses the experiences of the intersex community, making visible their demands, the marginalization they experience in healthcare, and the debt that the medical field still has with this community.

REFLECTIONS APPLIED TO SPEECH-LANGUAGE THERAPY

Speech-language therapy has been linked to the LGBTQIA+ community for almost 50 years. This relationship has mainly been established with trans women and is based on developing behaviors that are consistent with the social perception of the femininity of their roles and interactions. This is born from healthcare and focuses on vocal rehabilitation, which seeks to modify trans women's voices so that society better perceives and accepts them (Bralley et al., 1978).

Although several decades have passed, our profession (and other health professions) still reproduces gender stereotypes that, supported by a cis-heteronormative education, promote the maintenance of power relations between professionals and patients, in which correcting what is incongruent prevails. Moreover, this occurs in a context in which healthcare is commodified and the population is sold an image of optimal correction of incongruences related to binary and cis-heteronormative social constructs (Eckhert, 2016). This leads us, again, to a speech therapy practice that tirelessly asks how to make a voice more masculine or feminine.

Based on the above, reading the course manual "Conceptos LGBTQIA+: Desde un enfoque afirmativo y garante de derechos" (COLMED, 2021) can be a first step for speech and language therapists to learn about the realities and experiences of sex and gender diversity, reflect on their cis-heteronormative biases, and analyze how their daily practices contribute to discrimination, barriers, and violation of the rights of people from the LGBTQIA+ community. It is worth mentioning that people from this community may have needs related to communication

and swallowing that go beyond their voice (like any other person in this society), hence, sensitization and working on these issues should not be exclusive to those who work with trans people in the area of voice.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY

The Department of Gender and Health of COLMED believes that the experiences around gender should be under permanent analysis and reflection. For this reason, they have created a virtual space so that all those who have concerns and suggestions regarding the subjects covered and concepts or definitions that require revision, can send them through the following link:

<https://www.colegiomedico.cl/departamentos-colegio-medico/departamento-de-genero-y-salud/>

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FOOTNOTES

1. The following link offers a summary of legislative initiatives in different areas:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sZODIASkdToufckktlUDjB9IVjttuzz9/view?usp=sharing>