

LGBT People in Medicine Heterosexist Challenge

Heterosexism describes an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community. Heterosexism is reflected by personal assumptions that everyone in the world is, or should be, heterosexual. **Homophobia** is the irrational fear or hatred of homosexuals and homosexuality. Although often times found together, homophobia in our society is on the decline thanks to more positive public images of LGBT characters on television and film.

Heterosexism, however, persists at almost every level of society as the politically correct form of homophobia. Heterosexism hurts not only LGBT people, but can also hurt straight people who are wrongly assumed to be LGBT because of the way they act or dress. In the worst of these cases, straight people fall victim to violent LGBT Hate Crimes because of Heterosexist assumptions.

Allies are straight individuals who believe LGBT people are equal human beings and openly accept their LGBT peers, friends and family exactly as they are. Often times, Allies are the only defense against Heterosexism and Homophobia, as they combat both by living by example. LGBT people embrace Allied friends with enthusiasm and we ask them to be our **ADVOCATES**, not necessarily activists.

Take the Heterosexist Challenge today!! And see how YOU measure up!!



Heterosexist Challenge

Answer the following questions honestly and give each question a moment of reflection – picture yourself in each situation.

1. **DO YOU** assume that everyone you meet is heterosexual?
2. **DO YOU** try to guess which is the “man” or “woman” in a same-sex couple?
3. **DO YOU** look at an LGBT person and automatically think of his or her sexuality rather than seeing him as a whole, complex person?
4. **DO YOU** fail to confront a homophobic remark for fear of being identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?

5. **DO YOU** think that if a LGBT person touches you he or she is making sexual advances?
6. **DO YOU** think you can “spot one?”
7. **DO YOU** think that LGBT people are too outspoken when they ask for LGBT rights?
8. **DO YOU** feel that a gay or lesbian person is just a man or woman who couldn't find a mate of the opposite sex?
9. **DO YOU** use the term “gay” or “lesbian” as an accusation?
10. **DO YOU** (or would you) avoid mentioning to friends that you are involved with a LGBT student organization because you are afraid they will think you are gay?

Time to score your answers and see how you did! Count up the number of questions you answered “YES” to and this total makes up your score.

If you **scored 0** and answered NO to all of the above questions, you are a PROUD Ally who would wear a Rainbow Caduceus Pin without hesitation. You are very comfortable with your own sexual orientation and that is why you do not fear being associated with an LGBT organization. You might also have some LGBT friends because you do not make the general assumptions that most people make about LGBT people.

If you **scored between 1-5**, you are an Ally who would feel more comfortable wearing a “Straight but Not Narrow” Pin and would still be an advocate for your LGBT Peers and Patients. You are comfortable with helping your LGBT friends, but you fear someone you know will associate you with your gay friends and falsely identify you as gay – “gay by association.” With time, hopefully you will gain enough confidence to feel you can be an Ally without fearing being falsely identified as LGBT.

If you **scored between 5-10**, you are hesitant to be called an Ally and we encourage you learn more about the LGBT community. We hope you will keep an open mind and read the explanations to the 10 questions – Understanding Heterosexism. Please feel free to contact LGBTPM with questions or comments if you would like to discuss any of the questions!

Brought to you by AMSA and LGBT People in Medicine

*Assembled by David G. Chu (UPenn SOM 2002)
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