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Equality: an evaluation of the experience of LGBTQ+ healthcare students at university.

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Abstract -

Background: Evaluate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-heterosexual, non-cisgender (LGBTQ+) and cisgender/heterosexual (CisHet) healthcare students' experiences of social inclusion, mental health and wellbeing, staff support, discrimination, and diversity at university between 2018 and 2021.

Method: Statistical analysis using non-parametric (Mann-Whitney, Kruskal-Wallis, Dunn's multiple comparison test) and parametric (unpaired t-test) analyses on LGBTQ+ and CisHet students' responses to two questionnaires; Questionnaire A to students in the faculty of medicine and healthcare science in 2018, and Questionnaire B to medical students in 2021.

Findings: LGBTQ+ and CisHet students similarly felt welcome, however, LGBTQ+ students agreed significantly more than CisHet students that their sexual orientation influenced their sense of belonging, and they experienced or witnessed significantly more discrimination than CisHet students. In 2021, both groups felt less supported by their tutors, with LGBTQ+ students feeling more supported by their friends. LGBTQ+ students disagreed significantly more than CisHet students that there was sufficient LGBTQ+-diversity amongst staff and students and agreed less that the university encouraged LGBTQ+ diversity in staff. From 2018 to 2021, both groups' awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion policies increased, they found maintaining their wellbeing more difficult, and they felt similarly neutral regarding the diversity of resources.

Conclusions: While both groups' experiences were similar in many aspects, LGBTQ+ healthcare students had different experiences of inclusion, representation and discrimination than CisHet students. Recommendations included improving LGBTQ+ representation amongst staff and in the curriculum, increase signposting for wellbeing services, and make reporting of discrimination and harassment easier.

Keywords – LGBTQ+, Health Care students, Equality Diversity Inclusion

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