



WMA Statement on Natural Variations of Human Sexuality

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Preamble

Healthcare professionals encounter many aspects of human diversity when providing care, including different variations of human sexuality.

A large body of scientific research indicates that homosexuality is a natural variation of human sexuality without any intrinsically harmful health effects.

As a consequence homosexuality was removed from the American Psychiatric Association's official diagnostic manual in 1973. The World Health Organisation (WHO) removed it from the ICD in 1990 following a similar process of scientific review. The Pan American Health Organization (WHO) states: *"In none of its individual manifestations does homosexuality constitute a disorder or an illness, and therefore it requires no cure."*

Direct and indirect discrimination, stigmatisation, peer rejection, and bullying continue to have a serious impact upon the psychological and physical health of people with a homosexual or bisexual orientation. These negative experiences lead to higher prevalence rates of depression, anxiety disorders, substance misuse, and suicidal ideations and attempts. The suicide rate among adolescents and young adults with a homosexual or bisexual orientation is, consequently, three times higher than that of their peers.

This can be exacerbated by so-called "conversion" or "reparative" procedures, which claim to be able to convert homosexuality into asexual or heterosexual behaviour and give the impression that homosexuality is a disease. These methods have been rejected by many professional organisations due to a lack of evidence of their effectiveness. They have no medical indication and represent a serious threat to the health and human rights of those so treated.

Recommendations

The WMA strongly asserts that homosexuality does not represent a disease, but rather a natural variation within the range of human sexuality.

The WMA condemns all forms of stigmatisation, criminalisation and discrimination of people based on their sexual orientation.

The WMA calls upon all physicians to classify physical and psychological diseases on the basis of clinically relevant symptoms according to ICD-10 criteria regardless of sexual orientation, and to provide therapy in accordance with internationally recognised treatments and protocols.

The WMA asserts that psychiatric or psychotherapeutic approaches to treatment must not focus upon homosexuality itself, but rather upon conflicts, which arise between homosexuality, and religious, social and internalised norms and prejudices.

The WMA condemns so-called “conversion” or “reparative” methods. These constitute violations of human rights and are unjustifiable practices that should be denounced and subject to sanctions and penalties. It is unethical for physicians to participate during any step of such procedures.

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