

The voice of diversity: Speech-Language Pathology in LGBTQIAPN+ pride month

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In June 1969, the LGBTQIAPN+ community made history with the Stonewall Riots in New York City, USA. In the early hours of June 28, patrons of the Stonewall Inn bar fought back against a police raid (which was relatively common in bars with LGBTQIAPN+ customers), sparking protests that spread throughout the city. These events are widely recognized as catalysts for the modern LGBTQIAPN+ rights movement. The Stonewall Riots marked the beginning of a more vocal and organized fight against discrimination and for equal rights for the LGBTQIAPN+ community around the world. In recognition of this important date, June was chosen to celebrate LGBTQIAPN+ Pride Month worldwide, and June 28, the date to be observed as International LGBTQIAPN+ Pride Day^{1,2}.

Pride Month is celebrated worldwide, reaffirming and celebrating diverse gender identities, orientations, and expressions. It is an occasion to think about the importance of inclusion and respect for diversity in all areas of society, including health. In this context, the Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) plays a fundamental role in ensuring that all voices are heard, recognized, and respected.

THE ROLE OF THE SLP SCIENCES IN THE LGBTQIAPN+ COMMUNITY

Regardless of the area in which an SLP works, we, as Speech-Language Pathologists, encourage inclusive language terms to ensure that non-binary or gender-variant people are not excluded. SLP practice must be inclusive and culturally competent, especially when working with diverse populations such as the LGBTQIAPN+ community. Studies indicate an urgent need to promote cultural competence among Speech-Language Pathologists to better meet the needs of the LGBTQIAPN+ population³.

For instance, transgender individuals often seek SLP services to embrace their vocal and communicative identity as part of their gender affirmation process. However, many Speech-Language Pathologists still feel unprepared to provide these services, due to the lack of specific training in their undergraduate programs³.

Financial support: Nothing to declare

Conflict of interests: Nonexistent

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Received on June 11, 2024

Received in a reviewed form on September 2, 2024

Accepted on September 2, 2024



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CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND EDUCATION IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

It is imperative that SLP training include specific modules on the culture and needs of the LGBTQIAPN+ community. One study showed that students responded positively to a course on LGBTQIAPN+ issues, demonstrating greater interest, engagement, and awareness to better serve these clients⁴.

It is also crucial that Speech-Language Pathologists understand the importance of a person-centered and culturally responsive approach. This includes recognizing the impact of minority stress and micro-aggressions on the mental health and well-being of LGBTQIAPN+ people and adapting their practices to directly address these issues⁵.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Although significant progress has been made, many challenges remain. The inclusion of LGBTQIAPN+ diversity content in undergraduate SLP curricula is still limited and varies across institutions. There is an urgent need to standardize this education to ensure that all professionals are well-prepared. Recent studies highlight that many Speech-Language Pathologists still do not receive adequate training on communication and voice therapy for transgender people in their undergraduate programs³, and that Speech-Language Pathologists can learn about the LGBTQIAPN+ population in a variety of ways, such as conducting research, interacting with patients and others in office settings, and analyzing patient documentation⁶.

Furthermore, diversity within the SLP workforce also needs to be expanded. A research shows that a diverse workforce enriches professional practice and promotes more meaningful and equitable inclusion in the services provided⁷.

Content on LGBTQIAPN+ health must be included in the Brazilian National Curricular Guidelines for Undergraduate SLP to ensure a thorough and inclusive education for future Speech-Language Pathologists. Such inclusion is aligned with the principle of recognizing health as a right and ensuring comprehensive care, as already stipulated in the guidelines⁸. Aspects of gender and sexual orientation must be considered along with other socioeconomic, cultural, and historical dimensions to ensure that Speech-Language Pathologists can act competently and sensitively to the diverse needs of society. This approach promotes not only curative and preventive health actions and

services but also continuous and coordinated care at all complexity levels in the system, serving all individuals appropriately and respectfully, regardless of their personal characteristics or identity.

CONCLUSION

The SLP plays a vital role in promoting the health and well-being of the LGBTQIAPN+ community. Moving forward requires that SLP education incorporate robust diversity content and that professionals be prepared to provide culturally competent care. We must ensure that all voices, especially those of marginalized populations, are heard and respected. In doing so, we contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society.

As healthcare professionals, we are responsible for leading, as role models, promoting inclusion and equity in our daily practices. Due to the LGBTQIAPN+ Pride Month, we reiterate our commitment to diversity and pledge to continue learning and growing to better serve all members of our community.

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Authors' contributions:

GTD: Conceptualization; Writing - Original draft.

MFG, FM: Writing - Review & editing.