

Hamilton Trans Health Coalition

Project: Exploring definitions of allyship between physicians and the trans community

Contact: Hibah, Community Capacity Coordinator, hibah@hthc.ca

About the Organization:

(From their [website](#)): Hamilton Trans Health Coalition (HTHC) is “a non-profit coalition of healthcare providers, advocates, and community members working to increase the capacity of health systems in Hamilton, Ontario to meet the needs of trans, gender-diverse, and non-binary people.”

About the Initiative:

(From the community partner): In recent years the concept of allyship has become ubiquitous, with the term generally referring to the process of an individual in a position of power acting in solidarity with a marginalized group. The way this solidarity is enacted is of particular interest to us, since what constitutes solidarity is flexible and, in some instances, also contested (depending on the groups involved). While allyship is considered a lifelong process as opposed to an identity, it is used very often as an identity marker within cis populations. This is especially intriguing considering the fact that a common theme in the feedback that HTHC and similar organizations have received from the trans community emphasizes a lack of meaningful support from "allies". Thus, HTHC is looking to explore the gap between definitions and methods of enacting allyship from the perspective of physicians across Ontario and the trans community, and the solidarity that is needed versus the solidarity that is provided, as well as exploring possible barriers that contribute to this incongruity.

Having a local level of understanding of this disparity will complement the data collected by McMaster Research Shop in 2021 on local physician barriers and motivations, and support HTHC in working with our regional partners to share strategies to improve health outcomes that have worked in Hamilton with urban and rural communities across Ontario.

Research Questions:

How do primary care providers' definitions of allyship compare to the trans community?

To what extent are primary care providers enacting their definitions of allyship, and why?

Research Activities:

This research will involve primary data collection with primary healthcare providers (e.g., interviews).

Purpose:

(From the community partner): By exploring inconsistencies within definitions of solidarity and allyship, we can better inform clinicians and healthcare workers of best-practices and meaningful changes they can make to make trans patients feel genuinely supported, and to combat hostile social climates. This information can in turn inform training sessions, workshops,

and toolkits to align physicians' attitudes and behaviours with the needs and expectations of the trans community in Hamilton in order to create environments of safety and change. We know this information will be of particular interest to the family physicians in Hamilton who are already counted as "gender-affirming," to know in what ways their current practices of allyship may be less effective or helpful than they expect. It will also inform our engagement with health systems locally, where we see growing concern over disconnects between what leadership may claim about inclusion and respect within their service offerings and what trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse people actually experience. These lessons and data-supported conversations will increase the quality of gender-affirming care available in Hamilton.

Deliverable:

Plain language report with context, methods, and findings.

Timeline:

Winter semester (January to end of April).

Community Partner Role:

The community partner will:

- help with project onboarding
- develop a definition of allyship from the trans community and pass this definition along to the research team for analysis
- leverage their network and contacts and take the lead on participant recruitment (e.g., physicians for interviews)
- review all project deliverables including research plans and data collection tools
- be available as needed for consultation

Interest for Students:

Students interested in gender-affirming healthcare, transgender human rights, allyship, and health equity.