



Monthly Health Watch



News with a Monthly Health Theme

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Aetna Supports LGBT Pride Month with Tips for Finding and Working with a LGBT-Friendly Physician

By Peter Francel, Chairman of Aetna's LGBT Steering Committee

Aetna's DocFind® Helps Consumers Find a LGBT-Friendly Doctor

Finding the right doctor is important to everyone when trying to build a relationship with a physician. However, building that relationship can prove to be difficult when the doctor you are seeing is not sensitive to your needs, whether those needs involve speaking your language, understanding your cultural traditions, or respecting your sexual orientation.

Recently an employee at Aetna shared a story with me in which she told her doctor that she did not need a pregnancy test before surgery because of her sexual orientation. Regardless, the doctor demanded the test. The patient was angry and humiliated, and the health care system incurred unnecessary costs.

5 Ways Health Care Professionals Can Provide a Welcoming Environment

<http://www.glma.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=534>

1. List your practice with the GLMA referral program
2. Provide unisex bathrooms
3. Use the term "partner" as well as "spouse;" "relationship status" as well as "marital status"
4. Include information relevant to LGBT patients in educational brochures
5. Include a "transgender" check box on the medical history form

Making certain that everyone has access to the right physician or health care professional led Aetna to work with the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA) to help consumers find health care providers who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) friendly. Aetna is the first health benefits company to link its online provider directory -- DocFind® -- to GLMA's Provider Directory of primary care doctors, specialists, therapists, and dentists who are knowledgeable and attuned to LGBT concerns. GLMA encourages providers of all orientations who welcome LGBT patients to sign up for the provider directory. Basic listings are free, and more information is available at www.glma.org/referrals.

It's easy to understand why patients might be cautious about what information they share. However, LGBT patients have specific health needs and concerns, and they may be at heightened risk for certain health conditions. Doctors need to be aware of a patient's complete health history, including information about sexual orientation, so they can identify risks, order the right screening tests, and provide appropriate education and counseling. Too often doctors don't ask, and patients don't tell.

Aetna will continue its efforts to improve access to culturally-sensitive health care, just as we will continue our efforts to educate consumers about the importance of sharing a complete medical history with their doctors. The GLMA website has an excellent patient information section with several "Top Ten" lists of health issues LGBT patients should discuss with their physicians. There is also an excellent section for health care providers with suggestions on making LGBT patients feel welcome. I encourage you to visit www.GLMA.org for more ideas on how doctors and patients can work together to ensure good health.

Technology, Innovation & Reform: How a Personal Health Record Improves Care

Aetna recently spoke at the annual National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce "*Out For Business*" conference. One hot topic was health care reform, specifically the role of health information technology.

The Personal Health Record (PHR) is one way to use health information technology to improve care. A PHR is a record of doctor and hospital visits, lab tests and prescriptions. It also lets you add details that only you know, such as:

- Family medical history
- Sexual orientation
- Relationship status
- Use of alternative therapies, herbal supplements and over-the-counter drugs

Aetna's PHR uses patented CareEngine™ technology. This lets Aetna identify and alert members to potential gaps in care. It can also spot safety issues, such as dangerous drug interactions. The PHR helps consumers manage chronic diseases and includes wellness information, such as guidance on diet and exercise.

Some members of the LGBT community have expressed concern that a PHR could be shared inappropriately, and that this could result in discrimination. The member "owns" the PHR and controls access to it. Employers cannot access the information. Nor can partners or spouses. This is a critical point. People must have complete confidence in the privacy of their health information, and Aetna protects the privacy of the PHR.

The LGBT Steering Committee and Angle (Aetna's Network of LGBT Employees) Mean Business!

Aetna takes pride in fostering a workplace where people are accepted, valued, and encouraged to contribute their perspective. Aetna also believes in providing a work environment that is tolerant, open and encouraging of all people regardless of race, creed, color, orientation, gender, disability or background. The LGBT Steering Committee and Angle (Aetna's Network of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Employees) have been instrumental in shaping Aetna's commitment to drive better health care for the LGBT community. Their leadership resulted in Aetna's domestic partner benefits initiative. Aetna has offered health benefits to same-sex domestic partners since 1998. With input from the Aetna LGBT External Executive Advisory Council, the LGBT Steering Committee created the initiative that linked Aetna's DocFind to GLMA's online provider directory, the first health benefits company to do so. Angle is one of Aetna's longest running employee resource groups, and provides valuable input on product design and business initiatives as well as serving as an important networking resource for employees. These three organizations share one goal, and working collaboratively, they have propelled Aetna as a leader in providing health care to the LGBT community. Aetna takes great "Pride" in this accomplishment.

Did You Know...?

- For seven years in a row, Aetna has earned the top rating in the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index – one of a handful of companies earning this ranking since its inception
- Aetna ranked 5th on DiversityInc's Top 10 Companies for LGBT Employees (2009)
- Aetna President Mark Bertolini received the Healthcare Leadership Award in 2007 from the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce/Human Rights Campaign
- Aetna provides domestic partner coverage to its own employees. It also provides transgender coverage, including gender reassignment
- Aetna and the Aetna Foundation have awarded more than \$400,000 in grants and sponsorships to nonprofit organizations seeking to advance LGBT programs and initiatives