



Interview with 2020-2021 PAEA STAR Program Award Recipient

Quincy Jones, MSW, MHS, PA-C

PROJECT: LGBTQ CURRICULUM IN PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

Can you tell us about your research question for this project and its significance to the field of PA education? What kinds of new information or understanding do you hope this research will provide, and how do you see the results impacting PA education?

Our research question focuses on the amount and delivery of curricular content related to caring for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) populations. There is a gap in medical education literature addressing how medical learners are prepared to care for these populations. Specifically, it is unclear how much time is devoted to teaching this content, whether or not it is taught in didactic or clinical settings, and in which courses the content is included. The literature also fails to address which subgroups of the sexual and gender minority (SGM) population such as trans masculine, trans feminine, nonbinary, bisexual, lesbian, gay, genderqueer, are addressed in medical education and which are covered adequately.

Through this research, we hope to establish benchmarks to guide PA educators in inclusion of LGBTQ curricular content. By shedding light on how and when PA programs are educating their learners on this content, resources that are used to support content delivery and barriers faced, programs can better evaluate their own delivery of LGBTQ content in their curriculum. PA graduates need to be prepared to care for SGM patients in order to reduce the health disparities experienced by these populations. Curricular inclusion of LGBTQ content additionally aligns with the ARC-PA standards requiring instruction on the care of patients with consideration for gender identity and sexual orientation.

What do you anticipate are the challenges that programs currently face in benchmarking LGBTQ content within PA curriculum?

In the context of already full curricula, it is important for PA educators to consider how this important content is adequately covered within their program. Currently, there are not established benchmarks or best practices with regards to educating medical learners to care for sexual and gender minorities. This study seeks to provide PA programs with a benchmark to help them better evaluate their own curriculum and inclusion of LGBTQ content.



Do you see any policy or practice implications for your research?

Information gained from this research could be highly valuable to PA programs as they assess their curriculum and ensure alignment with the ARC-PA standards related to caring for sexual and gender minorities. Research results could additionally have implications for future ARC-PA standards with more specific guidance on inclusion of content to prepare students to care for sexual and gender minorities. Given the gap in medical education literature on this topic, findings may also generate discussion around the quantity and delivery of LGBTQ content in other health professions education.

You've assembled a team of researchers for this project, including a past awardee of the STAR program. What strengths and expertise will each of you bring to this study?

As a former social worker and PA who has always provided care to medically underserved populations, Quincy's interest and expertise in this area stems from ensuring that students are adequately prepared to care for patients most likely to experience health disparities. Quincy cares for LGBTQ patients as a family medicine PA, teaches related didactic content, developed a LGBTQ Health clinical rotation, and has helped assess inclusion of this content across her program's curriculum.

In addition to caring for LGBTQ patients at a community health center which serves a high population of medically underserved and marginalized individuals, Mara Sanchez is the course coordinator for the Patient Assessment and Counseling course at the Duke PA program. This course provides first-year PA students techniques and skills around communication, professionalism, history taking, and the physical examination of all patients. In the four years she has been at the Duke PA program, she has participated in sessions to increase faculty awareness in this area, as well as increased student hours related to content of LGBTQ curriculum in her course.

Susan is a psychometrician and education researcher focused on using data to help guide programmatic and personal improvements. She has a special interest in unrepresented and vulnerable populations and ensuring clinicians have the tools to provide adequate care to all patients.

Ms. Rolls is a co-founder and currently serves as the education director for the University of Utah Transgender Health Program. She presents nationally about LGBTQI healthcare disparities, best healthcare practices and curricular issues. She is a prior STAR award winner and the resultant manuscript was recently published in Academic Medicine.



What was the most challenging part of designing your study and writing this proposal and how did your team/you address it?

The most challenging part of designing this research proposal was narrowing the number of survey questions down to ten. Our team is truly passionate about this topic and there are so many factors related to the inclusion of LGBTQ content in PA education that we would love to gain more information about. Ultimately, with feedback from each other, including our team's previous STAR awardee, and the PAEA Research Review Team we were able to refine our questions to get the most possible information to answer our research question.

Do you have any advice for faculty who may be considering applying for this grant opportunity in the future, whether it's about developing a research question, assembling the right team of collaborators, or submitting a successful proposal?

If you are passionate about a topic in PA education that could be better understood with information from the Program Survey, consider submitting a STAR proposal. Start by collaborating with others who share your interest and spend some time truly focusing on what you would like to learn. Each member of our team has individually had interest in this area of PA education for several years, and after forming a team, we were able to really focus on specific areas of research interest with a plan to move forward. Seek and utilize feedback from other experts in your topic area and if your proposal is not initially accepted, use it as an opportunity for growth and consider submitting again in the future.