



# COLORS OF CARE

*TAKING PRIDE IN AUTHENTICITY AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL  
AT HOLY CROSS HEALTH*



HOLY CROSS HEALTH'S  
**LGBTQIA+**  
NEWSLETTER

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# COMING OUT TO YOUR DOCTOR: SEEKING EQUITY WITHIN THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

## Editor's Note

BY CANDACE BUSTAMANTE, BSN, RN, BSc

For many members of the LGBTQ+ community, coming out is not a one-time event. At every new healthcare visit, patients may wrestle with the decision to disclose their sexuality or gender identity, weighing the benefits of open communication against the risk of encountering bias, judgment, or dismissive care.

A recent survey found that 33% of LGBTQ+ adults reported being treated with disrespect by a healthcare provider within the past three years, compared to just 17% of non-LGBTQ+ patients (KFF, 2024). This disparity highlights the urgent need for healthcare professionals to create genuinely inclusive environments—ones where patients feel safe sharing personal details without fear of discrimination.

So how do we, as healthcare providers, cultivate that trust? How do we ensure that the "safe space" we promise is more than just a performative slogan, but a reality embedded in our care?

March is Bisexual Health Awareness Month, a time to recognize the unique challenges bisexual patients face in medical settings. Bisexual individuals often encounter harmful stereotypes from both within and outside the LGBTQ+ community, including assumptions that they are indecisive, promiscuous, or less committed in relationships. These biases seep into healthcare interactions, leading to inappropriate questioning, lack of sexual health education tailored to bisexual experiences, or outright dismissal of their identity. Many bisexual patients report feeling invisible or invalidated during medical visits, which can result in reluctance to seek care or disclose relevant health information.

As providers, we must actively challenge these stereotypes by using inclusive language, asking open-ended questions, and validating patients' identities without assumption or judgment. Instead of assuming a patient's sexuality based on their relationship status, we can ask, "Do you have any partners? Would you like to discuss your sexual health with me today?" Providing comprehensive sexual health discussions, mental

health support, and resources specific to bisexual patients can also help bridge the gap in care.

March also brings the Transgender Day of Visibility on the 31st—a celebration of trans resilience and a reminder of the ongoing fight for healthcare equity. Transgender patients frequently face barriers such as misgendering, lack of provider knowledge on gender-affirming care, and discomfort discussing their health concerns openly. A simple yet powerful way to affirm transgender patients is to ask for and consistently use their correct name and pronouns. Electronic health records should be updated to reflect this, ensuring that the patient is not misgendered at every interaction, from check-in to discharge.

Creating a welcoming and respectful healthcare environment means listening to patients without judgment, respecting their lived experiences, and ensuring that all individuals receive compassionate and appropriate care. Even small changes—like using inclusive intake forms, displaying LGBTQ+ health resources, and fostering open conversations—can make a significant impact on a patient's comfort level and trust in their provider.

At our core, we are all human beings seeking care, understanding, and dignity. By fostering a culture of respect, advocacy, and affirmation, we transform healthcare from a place of fear into one of healing. 🌈

*Candace Bustamante, BSN, RN, BSc is the Clinical Education Coordinator for the Community Health & Well-Being Department. With a diverse healthcare career spanning 16+ years, she is dedicated to fostering inclusivity, health, and community connection. With a passion for creating programs that make healthcare accessible and approachable, she brings both heart and expertise to her work. When not working on initiatives to improve community well-being, Candace enjoys exploring new recipes, uplifting others, and finding common ground in unexpected places.*



# PRAYER & FASTING

## Wellness Wisdom

BY MARY CARTER WARREN, D.MIN

Almost every world religion has a time and place for prayer and fasting; some with distinct times and places, some with many rules about the rubrics of the fast and prayer, some with more suggestions than requirements. The disciplines of prayer and fasting are seen as pathways to spiritual health, and the more we understand about health, the more we understand how our health of mind, body, and spiritual health are interconnected. To intentionally shape your life, even for short periods of time, around a connection with God and how you feed your body and spirit is an ancient way toward holiness. Contemplative prayer, stopping long enough to breathe, to acknowledge God, to listen to the small still voice within, changes us. When we slow down, if only for a short time, our perspective changes, and when we invite God to enter that space, it can be healing and transformational.

Fasting is not about denial of food for the sake of the denial, but when we are mindful about not eating at certain times or certain foods, we are reminded in our bodies of gratitude for what we have and humbled by our temporary hunger. It is also, in all religious traditions, a reminder that what we truly hunger for is something more, for God, for connection, for love, for peace. Fasting heightens our awareness of both our needs and our cravings.

The three Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all have intentional times of prayer and fasting that fall in March and April this year. Ramadan (February 28–March 29) involves thirty days of fasting and praying for Muslims throughout the world. This fasting, during all daylight hours for those thirty days, is not only from food and water but from the distractions that keep us from God, and ultimately from each other. Catholicism, as well as many Christian denominations, observes Lent as a time of prayer and fasting, from Ash Wednesday (March 5) through to Easter (April 20.) The idea of “giving something up for Lent” still stands – many give up a favorite food or beverage or cut back on social media – but many more choose to do something positive for those forty days – writing a thank you note to those

to those for whom you are grateful or reaching out to a family member who needs help, or doing random acts of kindness. Passover (April 12–20) in the Jewish tradition offers a time of fasting from all foods with leavening (Feast of Unleavened Bread) and to recall the story of the Exodus, G-d’s faithful leading of the Israelites from slavery to freedom. The prayer and symbolic foods of the Seder meal combine attention to what we eat and the sustaining prayers and stories of G-d’s faithfulness.

**“BE CURIOUS ABOUT THE WAYS THAT PRAYER AND FASTING MIGHT FEED YOUR OWN HEALTH OF MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT.”**

Be curious about the ways that prayer and fasting might feed your own health of mind, body, and spirit. Be curious about how different religious traditions incorporate prayer and fasting into their own practices. Blessings on all who observe the times of Ramadan, Lent, and Passover. 🌈

*Mary Carter Warren, D.Min., serves as the Mission Leader at Holy Cross Health, where she oversees Mission Integration Essential Services, including ethics, spiritual care, and ministry formation, while collaborating with leadership to advance the organization’s Catholic healthcare mission. She played a key role in establishing the Legacy Program, which nurtures the spirituality of colleagues and educates them on the values of Catholic healthcare. With a doctorate in ministry and over 25 years of experience in education and peacebuilding, she has also served as founding director of the Center for Peace and Justice at St. Thomas University and held leadership roles with the School Sisters of Notre Dame.*



# PROVIDER FEATURE: Fighting Cancer in the LGBTQ+ Community: What You Need to Know

BY SIMON BLANC, MD

Cancer remains a significant health concern for many, but did you know that LGBTQ+ individuals face unique risks when it comes to cancer? Factors like healthcare barriers, smoking rates, and lifestyle habits contribute to disparities that make early detection and prevention even more important. Here's what you need to know to stay ahead of the game and protect your health.

## The Cancers You Should Have on Your Radar

### **Lung Cancer: The Smoking Connection**

Smoking rates among LGBTQ+ individuals are higher than in the general population—putting many at risk for lung cancer. If you smoke, consider quitting. There are many LGBTQ+-friendly cessation programs that can help you kick the habit for good.

### **Breast Cancer: Why Screenings Matter**

Lesbian and bisexual women often experience barriers to healthcare, making routine mammograms less common. But regular screenings save lives! If you're overdue for a mammogram, schedule one today.

### **Anal Cancer: The HPV Factor**

HPV-related cancers are on the rise, particularly among gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. The good news? The HPV vaccine can help protect you. If you haven't gotten yours yet, talk to your doctor about getting vaccinated. Be sure to also ask about anal pap smears to screen for HPV-related precancerous lesions.

### **Cervical Cancer: Don't Skip That Pap Smear**

Regular gynecological visits can be uncomfortable—especially if you've faced discrimination in healthcare. But skipping a Pap smear could mean missing an early sign of cervical cancer. Look for an LGBTQ+-affirming provider who makes you feel comfortable and supported.

### **Prostate Cancer: Not Just for Cisgender Men**

Transgender women who've undergone hormone therapy might still be at risk for prostate cancer. Regular check-ups and open discussions with your doctor can help catch any potential issues early.

## **Prevention is Power**

Taking care of your health doesn't have to be overwhelming. Here are some easy steps to lower your risk:

- **Get Screened:** Routine cancer screenings save lives—don't put them off.
- **Vaccinate:** The HPV vaccine is a game-changer in preventing certain cancers.
- **Quit Smoking:** If you smoke, find a support program that understands your needs.
- **Eat Well & Move More:** A healthy lifestyle goes a long way in keeping cancer at bay.
- **Find an LGBTQ+-Friendly Doctor:** Having a supportive healthcare provider makes all the difference.

## **Treatment: Early Detection Saves Lives**

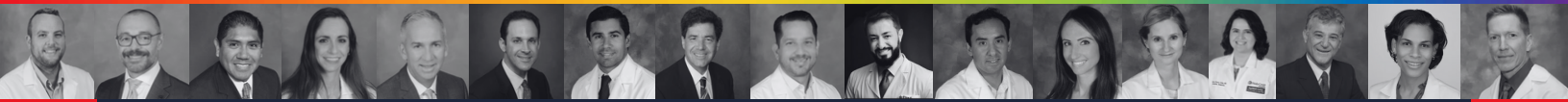
The good news is that cancer treatments are highly effective, especially when the disease is caught early. Advances in medical technology, targeted therapies, and improved screening methods have led to significantly higher survival rates. Many cancers, including breast, cervical, and prostate cancers, have excellent treatment success rates when diagnosed at an early stage. Regular screenings and prompt medical attention increase the chances of successful treatment and long-term health.

## **The Bottom Line**

Cancer doesn't discriminate, but the healthcare system sometimes does. By staying informed, advocating for yourself, and seeking LGBTQ+-affirming care, you can take charge of your health and reduce your risk. Knowledge is power—so spread the word and help your community stay strong and healthy! 🌈

*Simon Blanc, MD is a board-certified hematologist-oncologist, specializes in lung, breast, gastrointestinal, and genitourinary cancers. He trained at top institutions in the U.S., including Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, Mount Sinai, and Memorial Sloan-Kettering, following his medical education in Lebanon and France.*





# CELEBRATING OUR SAFE ZONE PROVIDERS ON NATIONAL DOCTORS' DAY

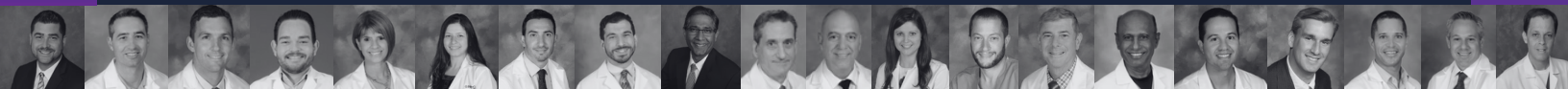
On this National Doctors' Day (March 30th), we honor and appreciate the compassionate care provided by our Safe Zone Providers. These are healthcare professionals who have committed to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and affirming environment for LGBTQ+ patients.

Featured here are some of the Holy Cross Health providers who have proudly designated their clinics as Safe Zones, ensuring that every patient receives the care they deserve with dignity and respect.

Thank you to all our Safe Zone Providers for your dedication to health equity and patient-centered care!



**SAFEZONE**



# GET YOUR REAR IN GEAR! COLORECTAL HEALTH FOR ALL!

BY VON BIGGS, HIV & HEALTHCARE ADVOCATE

Now that I have your attention! Colorectal cancer is a major health issue nationwide, and South Florida is no exception. Within this region, diverse communities, including LGBTQ+ individuals, face unique challenges that can impact their experience with this disease.

## Increased Risk Factors

In South Florida, various behavioral, social, and healthcare-related factors contribute to the risk of colorectal cancer across all communities. Elevated rates of smoking, alcohol consumption, and obesity are common concerns. The statistics show that 1 in 24 men and 1 in 26 women will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer in their lifetime.

## Healthcare Access Barriers

A significant issue is the barrier to accessing quality healthcare. Fear of discrimination and a lack of culturally competent healthcare providers prevent many LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as other minority groups, from seeking regular screenings and medical advice. This hesitation often results in later-stage diagnoses when the cancer is more advanced and harder to treat.

## The Importance of Early Screening

Early detection through regular screening is crucial in reducing colorectal cancer mortality rates. However, many people, including those in the LGBTQ+ community, are unaware of the importance of these screenings or lack access to LGBTQ+-friendly healthcare services. Increasing awareness and providing resources tailored to diverse communities can significantly improve early detection rates.

## Community Efforts

South Florida's vibrant and diverse community can play a key role in addressing these disparities. Local organizations and healthcare providers must collaborate to create targeted outreach programs. These initiatives should focus on educating all individuals about the importance of colorectal cancer screening and providing safe, non-discriminatory healthcare environments.



In South Florida, the situation is particularly concerning. We have seen a higher incidence of colorectal cancer compared to other parts of the state, and late-stage diagnoses are more common. This highlights the urgent need for increased awareness and access to screening services.

## A Call to Action

As we observe Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month this March, it's crucial to address the unique healthcare needs of all communities in South Florida, including LGBTQ+ individuals. If you're only visiting a clinic focused on HIV/STI or PrEP services that doesn't offer colorectal cancer screenings, it's time to take charge of your health

and seek comprehensive care from a fully integrated primary care provider. Many specialized clinics lack these essential screenings, which limits your access to necessary preventive care. You deserve the best healthcare options available to you.

By fostering an inclusive healthcare system and promoting regular screenings, we can reduce the impact of colorectal cancer on all vulnerable populations. Community leaders, healthcare providers, and policymakers must work together to ensure that every individual, regardless of their sexual orientation or background, has access to the care they need.






Addressing colorectal cancer in South Florida's diverse communities requires a comprehensive approach that includes education, community support, and healthcare reform. By acknowledging and tackling these unique challenges, we can make significant strides in improving health outcomes for everyone. 🌈

*Von Biggs is a passionate advocate for HIV awareness and health equity. As the Community Outreach Coordinator at Holy Cross Health and an anchor for Queer News Tonight, Von tirelessly highlights critical issues affecting marginalized communities, including the LGBTQ+ population. Through his leadership as Vice Chair of the Ryan White Part A Planning Council, Von is dedicated to dismantling stigma around HIV and mental health, advancing inclusive, trauma-informed care, and championing the needs of the aging HIV community. His unwavering commitment and visionary leadership are driving forces in the fight for health equity and social justice.*



## UPCOMING EVENTS:

Contact Von Biggs at [Von.Biggs@Holy-Cross.com](mailto:Von.Biggs@Holy-Cross.com) to volunteer for any of the following events:

	<b>March 1</b>	<b>Live Well Now: Health &amp; Wellness Fest</b>	Explore LGBTQ+ wellness, on-site free screenings, and expert advice to kickstart your health journey at Hagen Park.
	<b>March 1</b>	<b>Sunshine Cathedral Health Fair - Farmer's Market</b>	Holy Cross Health will be offering free on-site screenings for HIV, STIs, and more.
	<b>March 10</b>	<b>Sisters in Health &amp; Unity</b>	Join us for conversations on the impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls in our communities at the Center for Spiritual Living.
	<b>March 31</b>	<b>Transgender Day of Visibility</b>	Enjoy an evening of food, advocacy, and amazing entertainment with the Transinclusive Group and community partners at the Pride Center.
	<b>June 14</b>	<b>Stonewall PRIDE Wilton Manors</b>	Wilton Manors Stonewall Pride celebrates the historic Stonewall Riots and the start of the LGBTQ+ human rights movement, highlighting its impact on our community.

# STAYING INFORMED AND ENGAGED: UPDATES ON THE 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BY JOEY WYNN, MBA

The past two months have been a whirlwind of changes, budget cuts, and massive layoffs. These huge changes cause fear in most, but we will attempt to keep readers informed of what is known, as opposed to fears about what may be. There was a lone elected official from Michigan trying to get a bill co-sponsor to overturn *Obergefell v. Hodges* (the legality of same sex marriage), but there was no one willing to step forward. This gives us a pause for reflection and although concerning, not yet time to panic. Talking with your local elected officials and emails & calls to your Senators are still the best ways to put a human face to an issue.

## 2025 Legislative Session Interim Legislative Update - February 24, 2025

**Last week in Tallahassee:** Florida Legislators were back to hold their final interim committee meetings in preparation for the upcoming 2025 Legislative Session. Monday, James Uthmeier was formally sworn into office as Florida's newest Attorney General.

The Board is moving swiftly to enforce the sweeping immigration laws passed recently and started their work by passing two immigration resolutions; confirming Larry Keefe as the Exec. Director of the new Board. In the Legislature, 940 bills have been filed for consideration in the 2025 Legislative Session. Only a few have been considered in their first committee stop and we expect many more bills will be filed prior to the filing deadlines of February 28th in the House and March 4th in the Senate.

Meanwhile, Legislators return to their districts this week; when they return for the official start of Session March 4th, we anticipate the pace of session to rapidly increase as the 60-day clock countdown begins to tick. 🌈

**Joey Wynn, MBA** is the Grants and Contracts Manager for the Community Health & Well-Being Department. Wynn is a public health advocate with 30 years of experience in HIV patient care, prevention, and policy in Florida. He specializes in data analysis, simplifying complex concepts, and delivering engaging presentations with humor and passion. As a longtime leader in advocacy, he has secured state funding, chaired the South Florida AIDS Network, and trained healthcare professionals across Florida.





MARCH 31 IS

# TRANSGENDER DAY OF VISIBILITY

Before 2009, the transgender community's only well-known day was the Transgender Day of Remembrance, a solemn occasion honoring lives lost to violence, but no dedicated day to celebrate achievements or raise awareness of ongoing discrimination. Determined to change this, transgender activist Rachel Crandall Crocker spearheaded the effort to establish such a day—an initiative that ultimately gained recognition from the Obama administration and the rest of the world.

In honor of the trailblazers who have fought for transgender rights and visibility, **click the article titles below** to read more about of the contributions of influential transgender leaders:



## [TRAILBLAZING TRANSGENDER DOCTOR SAVED COUNTLESS LIVES](#)

After transitioning in 1917, Alan L. Hart helped alter medical history.

**SCI AM** Scientific American / Feb 20, 2024

## [HOW HISTORIANS ARE DOCUMENTING THE LIVES OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE](#)

The term “transgender” wasn’t coined until the 1960s—but people have always challenged the gender binary. Here’s a look at their history, from ancient civilizations to the modern rights movement.

 National Geographic / Jun 24, 2022



## [7 TRANSGENDER WOMEN WHO MADE HISTORY](#)

From Stonewall to the Grand Prix, see how they made their mark on the world.

 Google Arts & Culture / n.d.



## [THE FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S FIRST TRANS CLINIC](#)

The Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin would be a century old if it hadn't fallen victim to Nazi ideology.

**SCI AM** Scientific American / May 10, 2021



# AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIORAL FINANCIAL HARDSHIP AND HEALTHCARE UTILIZATION AMONG LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, QUEER, PLUS CANCER SURVIVORS

*Notable Articles*

BY AUSTIN R WATERS, MSPH, STEPHANIE B WHEELER, PHD, MPH, JEREMEY FINE, CHRISTABEL K CHEUNG, PHD, MSW, KELLY R TAN, PHD, RN, DONALD L ROSENSTEIN, MD, MYA L ROBERSON, PHD, MSPH, ERIN E KENT, PHD, MS

ARTICLE & ABSTRACT ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN *JNCI: JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE*, JANUARY 2, 2025

## Background

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or another nonheterosexual or cisgender identity (LGBTQ+) cancer survivors experience high financial hardship. However, structural drivers of inequities do not impact all LGBTQ+ individuals equally. Using All of Us data, we conducted an intersectional analysis of behavioral financial hardship among LGBTQ+ cancer survivors.

## Methods

LGBTQ+ inequities in behavioral financial hardship (ie, cost-related foregone care, delayed care, and medication alterations) and non-cost-related delayed care were estimated using All of Us data. Multivariable logit models were used to generate predicted probabilities, average marginal effects, and 95% confidence intervals. Models were then used to estimate inequities when disaggregating LGBTQ+ status and combining LGBTQ+ status with age, race, ethnicity, and treatment status.

## Results

This analysis included N = 36,217 cancer survivors (6.6%, n = 2,399 LGBTQ+). In multivariable models, LGBTQ+ identity was associated with higher probabilities of and significant average marginal effects for all types of behavioral financial hardship (foregone care 31.1% vs 19.4%; delayed care 22.6% vs 15.6%; medication alterations 19.2% vs 11.9%) and non-cost delayed care (14.3% vs 7.2%). Within the disaggregated analysis, cisgender bisexual and another/multiple orientation women and gender minority survivors had the highest predicted probabilities of all outcomes. In intersectional analyses, survivors who were aged 18-39 and LGBTQ+, Black and LGBTQ+, or Hispanic/Latine and LGBTQ+ had the highest predicted probabilities of all outcomes.

## Conclusions

LGBTQ+ cancer survivors experience significantly more behavioral financial hardship and non-cost-related delayed care than non-LGBTQ+ cancer survivors. Interventions at the individual, system, and policy level are needed to address LGBTQ+ inequities in financial hardship. 🌈

To read this article in its entirety, visit <https://doi.org/10.1093/jnci/djae350> or the 'JNCI' journal referenced below. All rights are reserved by the authors and cited journal. Holy Cross Health does not claim ownership or authorship in any capacity.

## Reference:

Waters, A. R., Wheeler, S. B., Fine, J., Cheung, C. K., Tan, K. R., Rosenstein, D. L., Roberson, M. L., & Kent, E. E. (2025). An intersectional analysis of behavioral financial hardship and healthcare utilization among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, plus cancer survivors. *JNCI: Journal of the National Cancer Institute*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jnci/djae350>

*Get Involved*

# PARTNER WITH S.P.I.R.I.T.!

Volunteer with the S.P.I.R.I.T. Committee, your Holy Cross Health LGBTQ+ colleague group. It's a fantastic way to meet fellow colleagues, promote Holy Cross's commitment to the LGBTQ+ community, and have fun. Volunteer responsibilities include setting up and breaking down event tables, tabling during events, and engaging with the community.

In the coming months, we will focus on celebrating Holy Cross Wilton Manors' 25th Anniversary.

The S.P.I.R.I.T. Committee is Holy Cross Health's internal advisory committee focused on LGBTQ+ patient care issues. S.P.I.R.I.T. stands for Showing Pride, Inclusiveness, Respect & Integrity at Trinity Health.

Our mission is to promote visibility and awareness of the LGBTQ+ community within Trinity Health through building connections between LGBTQ+ and Allies, and by promoting acceptance and equity for all colleagues regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.



## NEXT MEETING:

**Wednesday, 3/26 at 5:00-6:30PM**  
**Wilton Manors Clinic 1402 NE 26th St.**  
**Wilton Manors 33305**

Check us out on SharePoint or contact Dr. Jason Ceavers on Teams or [Jason.Ceavers001@Holy-Cross.com](mailto:Jason.Ceavers001@Holy-Cross.com) for more information.