

**XXIII ILGA
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27th March – 3rd April 2006



For lesbians, being public about cancer has parallels with coming out as a lesbian. Cancer and lesbian identity have historically evoked shame, and we share a long tradition of hiding both. Often neither identity is immediately obvious to others, and so lesbians, and all women with cancer, face ongoing choices about coming out.

From the brochure "Coming Out about lesbians and cancer", by Lesbians and Breast Cancer Project, Canada.



The right to health proscribes discrimination on various grounds, including on grounds of sexual orientation. (...) a lack of support or protection in the face of violence and discrimination impedes the realization of sexual and reproductive health rights for sexual minorities including lesbian and bisexual women, and that sexual and other health services must also be available to them.

Paul Hunt, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest standard of physical and mental health.

What is the impact of lesbophobia and sexism on health?

STIs are the domain of gay men and heterosexuals right? Wrong. Oral and other kinds of sex carry a risk for lesbians too and it's worth knowing about them.

"One challenge with the women's work has been issues of how women choose to be represented visually without falling into stereotypes and also about how risqué language could be used

Nicky Coia, Senior Health Promotion Officer, of NHS Greater Glasgow, UK.



"Then I got pushed up against the door frame and was getting punched and kicked in the crotch. It really freaked me out, here I was being held and battered, and there was nothing I could do. Then I got thrown to the ground, and she was on top of me banging my head on the floor."

Violence among lesbian couples
Mira Ofreno / Can't Live in the Closet - The Philippines

Wednesday 29th March - Preconference

A major concern in relation to healthcare and lesbians is the fact that lesbians do not access the healthcare system in the same way as heterosexual women, because birth control and family planning services are not priority issues for lesbians. There is research evidence that shows that lesbians are less likely to get regular PAP smears or breast examinations, both important preventative measures.

Survey carried out by Ilga Europe in partnership with 5 organisations in Hungary, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and the Republic of Moldova.

Fundamental to Dorothy's approach to sexual health is a commitment to teaching people about sexual pleasure. Her collection of sex toys and aids has a very serious intent: she believes that enhancing sexual pleasure not only improves communication, but crucially, also minimises domestic violence.

From an interview of Dorothy Aken'Ova, Nigeria, to the BBC World Service "I Challenge" by Linda Pressly.

In the case of lesbian women, and particularly butch lesbian women, rape is used to demonstrate that as women they are subject to the power of men over their lives. "Curative rape" is motivated by the belief that lesbian women are attempting to "pretend" to be men and is designed to "prove" that they are women.

Toni Kruger / OUT - South Africa

What do we mean by lesbian and bisexual women's health?



Is health perceived in the same way throughout all continents?

Those extracts are taken from ILGA's report on lesbian and bisexual women's health which will be launched in Geneva.