

## **Culture in Medicine Seminar (2011): Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Health Care Disparities**

Data from the California Health Interview Study (CHIS)\* indicate significant disparities in the mental and physical well-being of the LGBT population when compared to the heterosexual population. Sources of LGBT health disparities are in part due to the cumulative and intersecting impact of many different factors, particularly reduced access to employer-provided health insurance, the social stigma that exists against LGBT people, and a lack of cultural competence in the health care system. People who are both LGBT and members of a racial or ethnic minority will often face the highest levels of health disparities.

### **Access to health care and health insurance**

*Heterosexual adults are more likely to have health insurance coverage.*

% of adults with health insurance

- 82% Heterosexual
- 77% LGB
- 57% Transgender

*LGB adults are more likely to delay or not seek medical care.*

% of adults delaying or not seeking health care

- 17% Heterosexual
- 29% LGB

### **Impact of societal biases on physical health and well-being**

*LGB adults are more likely to have cancer.*

% of adults ever diagnosed with cancer

- 6% Heterosexual
- 9% LGB

*LGB youth are more likely to be threatened or injured with a weapon in school.*

% of youth threatened or injured with a weapon

- 5% Heterosexual
- 19% LGB

*LGB youth are more likely to be in physical fights that require medical treatment.*

% of youth in a physical fight requiring medical treatment

- 4% Heterosexual
- 13% LGB

### **Impact of societal biases on mental health and well-being**

*LGB adults are more likely to experience psychological distress.*

% of adults experiencing psychological distress in past year

- 9% Heterosexual
- 20% LGB

*Transgender adults are much more likely to have suicide ideation.*

% of adults reporting suicide ideation

- 2% Heterosexual
- 5% LGB
- 50% Transgender

*LGB youth are much more likely to attempt suicide.*

% of youth reporting suicide attempts

- 10% Heterosexual
- 35% LGB

\*CHIS is one of the few comprehensive, ongoing state-level health surveys that regularly collects information on sexual orientation. No federal health survey includes a question on sexual orientation or gender identity. Although statistics on California's LGB residents cannot be generalized to the national LGB population, it is useful to analyze California since it has the largest LGB population in the United States. The Williams Institute, a think tank at the UCLA School of Law dedicated to sexual orientation law and public policy, estimates that 1.3 million LGB adults live in California, representing about 15 percent of the estimated 8.8 million LGB adults in the United States.