

## 2004

Recipients

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**“Empowering Ourselves to Thrive: Identifying and disseminating information about lesbian and bisexual women’s strategies for achieving a sense of wellbeing”**

The primary aims of this qualitative, interview-based research project were to collect and to disseminate information about the strategies bisexual and lesbian women employ in order to achieve well-being. The focus was to make the outcomes available as a resource to lesbian and bisexual women and community organisations as well as to policymakers and care providers.

**Publication in peer-reviewed journal:**

Mulligan E and Heath M. Seeking open minded doctors. How women who identify as bisexual, queer or lesbian seek quality health care. Australian Family Physician 2007; 36 (6): 469-471.

**BACKGROUND** Bisexual, queer and lesbian women experience higher rates of discrimination, trauma and abuse and are at higher risk for adverse health outcomes than heterosexual women in the same populations. This research investigated the strategies these women use to maximise the quality of health care they receive.

**METHODS** Semi-structured interviews with 47 self identified bisexual, queer and lesbian women. Predominant themes were correlated with findings by other researchers.

**RESULTS:** These women sought skilled practitioners who responded positively or neutrally to their sexuality. Some did not disclose their sexuality even where it seemed relevant, or preferred finding an accepting practitioner to ensuring continuity of care. Additional strategies for obtaining quality care included: ‘coming out’, selecting practitioners carefully, and educating practitioners about sexuality.

**DISCUSSION** Like those in other countries, Australian bisexual, queer, and lesbian women do not assume that health practitioners will accept their sexuality. They seek to avoid hostility by locating sympathetic practitioners. General practitioners can signal their willingness to provide quality services to these patients by relatively simple methods.