World Health Organization Set to Change the Way Doctors Treat Transgender People

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For the more than 25 million transgender people around the world, violence, stigma and lack of legal recognition contribute to significant health risks across the community, according to findings of a new study published by the Lancet medical journal. But the World Health Organization (WHO) confirms that in 2018 the agency plans to officially address the way the international medical community diagnoses transgender people as a way to help mitigate those risks, Mother Jones reports.

According to the study, most doctors around the world can't help people who want to transition because they currently have no training in specific care for transgender people, such as hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery. What's more, the study's authors noted that institutionalized stigma against trans people—especially in terms of their current medical classification—stops doctors from accepting many transgender patients in the first place.

The Lancet report specifically referenced the WHO's International Classification of Diseases, a medical manual of diagnoses and conditions used by psychiatrists and medical doctors around the world. Currently, the book doesn't mention the word *transgender*. Instead, the manual lists outdated and stigmatizing terms such as *transsexualism*, *dual-role transvestism* and *gender identity disorder of childhood* in reference to transgender people and places them in a chapter titled "Mental and Behavioral Disorders."

"I don't think there's any country in the world in which trans people don't have to live day after day with stigma," said Sam Winter, a professor of sexology at Curtin University in Australia and one of the study's authors. "They're living with the stigma [and] everything that comes out of the stigma, and it really does have an impact on their lives."

A WHO working group pressed the international organization to move forward in defining transgender as a condition "related to sexual health," rather than suggesting that this population group is mentally disturbed. Researchers said this modification would help tremendously to address the stigma transgender people face both in and out of the medical community.

If your child thinks he or she is transgender or is questioning his or her gender identity, click here

for tips on how to discuss gender and sexual identity with children.

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