

Promoting Health & Wellbeing of SGM at Moot Court

By **Amanda Manago** - November 3, 2019



The panel was made up of various members of the community. From left to right, Salvator Biazzo, Karl Kingsley, Perry Cohen, Jennifer Parr and Georgiann Davis. Photo by Abby Moynihan.

The UNLV Women's Council held a panel discussion promoting the health and wellbeing of sexual and gender minorities featuring professors and scholars from across the university on Monday, Oct. 28.

Panelists included:

- Salvatore Biazzo, D.O., Senior Staff Physician at the UNLV Student Health and FAST Center.
- Perry Cohen, Executive Director & Instructor at The Venture Out Project.
- Georgiann Davis, Ph. D., Associate Professor of Sociology at UNLV College of Liberal Arts.
- Karl Kingsley, Ph. D., MPH, Professor of Biomedical Sciences at UNLV School of Dental Medicine.
- Jennifer Pharr, Ph. D., MPH, Associate Professor of Environmental & Occupational Health at UNLV School of Public Health.

All panelists were asked a variety of questions including what led them into the SGM population, their visions for the future of SGM health, their health providers and experiences.

Cohen, who used to live in Massachusetts, only had one provider to help him transition into becoming the man he is today. His vision is to revolutionize medicine so that students do not feel judged or uncomfortable when taking hormones or prescriptions.

Biazzo leans more towards training not only the people but training medical students to help sexual and gender minorities. He encourages students to



Dr. Georgiann Davis, a member of the panel, voiced her concerns

treat people with dignity and respect whenever an SGM approaches them for help. and ideas during the discussion.
Photo by Abby Moynihan

"[We even] redid the health history form," Biazzo mentions. Through this, the visitors can select which gender they assume fit or how they identify themselves in paperwork.

Kingsley was the first openly gay professor at the UNLV dental school. He embraces it and is still shocked by how people react to his position. He spoke on experiences from when he was first introduced to the topic and his experiences with the SGM population.

Davis identifies as an intersex and she took interest in SGM from when she first introduced to it. Her strong opinions were carried throughout the entire panel. One of the topics mentioned was educating children about the SGM community and Davis voiced her concerns about the children.

"Children are sexualized," Davis said.

Intersex individuals are born with variations of sex characteristics like chromosomes, hormones or genitals. Davis mentioned during the panel her inability to have a period because her body simply couldn't but that did not slow her down in voicing a message to the people.

Cohen sparked interest in the SGM population and how their sexuality and gender affect their lives after learning that his doctor was unaware of his gender transition until a visit due to a bicycle accident.

One of the questions asked was, "What were the disparities that were experienced by SGM patients?"

Pharr mentioned the big concern for the LGBTQ community is limited healthcare funding. Some doctors have scarce availability of the hormones and medications needed to treat members of the community. In order to gain more access to them, it requires an extended process that not a lot of doctors are willing to do.

Cohen believes health care avoidance is a bigger barrier for the SGM population. Patients may avoid health care providers for fear of feeling uncomfortable or because of prior visit experiences. Patients do not want to be judged again for what they are trying to be or who they are.

Biazzo, who remained on the medical side of the conversation, mentioned previous harm in the field caused by personnel's mistakes when pertaining to the community.

"We are working against time," Biazzo said. As doctors attempt to fix past mistakes, new topics and issues continue to come up, so they must catch-up at times.

The medical field is always advancing and the SGM community continues to grow. As doctors and assistants learn new practices, access to them can be difficult for the population.

The concept of sexual and gender diversity has always been brought up but under different terms and different views. The panelists fostered insight for attendees and UNLV students on the topic.

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