Examining the Health Disparities and Psychological Struggles Experienced by LGBT Youth

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Learning Outcomes:
As a result of participating in this educational activity, learners will be able to:
- Identify signs and psychosomatic symptoms of victims of bullying;
- Familiarize school nurses with resources for LGBT youth and their families; and
- Explain the importance of school climate as it relates to bullying of LGBT youth.

About the Session:
Dealing with the challenges of being a teenager, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) youth many times also have to deal with harassment, intimidation and bullying on a daily basis. Their school work, mental health and physical well-being are all at risk. School nurses play a major role in identifying, counseling and protecting the victims of bullying. The school nurse is often seen by students as a confidant, someone who is outside the academic system and is in a position to help and give guidance. In order to provide holistic care, school nurses must be culturally competent by being sensitive to health disparities experienced by students in at-risk populations. Despite the growing acceptance towards gender and sexual minorities, LGBT youth disproportionately experience verbal and physical harassment while in school as a result of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Indeed, this violence adversely affects these students' health and well-being as reflected in the suicide rate among LGBT youth. As such, school nurses must not only to be able to recognize at-risk students but also provide culturally competent care when working with LGBT youth. Given their expertise in psychosocial health and responsibility for promoting health and safety in schools, school nurses can help queer students navigate these emotional times by serving as confidantes, experts, and educators. It is important that nurses know the signs and symptoms of victims as well as strategies that are effective to help youths, families and school personnel respond to LGBT bullying.

Why this is important to a school nurse:
The purpose of this activity is to enable the learner to inform school nurses about how to identify, counsel and protect LGBT victims of bullying.

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