

## SIDNEY KIMMEL COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

### Background

#### What is Asexuality?

- Asexuality is defined as a sexual orientation where individuals never or rarely experience sexual attraction
- Known as “the invisible orientation<sup>1</sup>” due to lack of awareness, acceptance, and exclusion, even in sexual orientation and gender identity research (SOGI)
- To increase visibility International Asexuality Day is celebrated annually on Apr 6th <sup>2</sup>



#### Asexual Patient Experiences

- Patients report clinician disbelief of their identity and unnecessary referrals or procedures to “diagnose,” identify the “cause,” or even attempt to “cure” their asexuality
- This exclusion can result in discrimination in healthcare settings and decreased trust in medical professionals
- Asexual individuals are ten percent more likely to be offered or to undergo conversion therapy compared to people of other sexual orientations<sup>3</sup>
- While not fully defined, asexual patients may have lower adherence to cancer screenings, such as pap smears<sup>4,5</sup>

### Goals

Establish a partnership between the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center (SKCCC) at Jefferson’s Clinical Trials Office and the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to provide education on asexuality to our cancer center community based on an assessment of existing educational opportunities

We anticipate that increased education and awareness will support positive healthcare interactions with individuals who identify as asexual and, may ultimately, increase their willingness to seek medical care and support trust in clinical recommendations including cancer clinical trials

### Solutions and Methods

#### We reviewed

- Electronic medical record (EMR) sexual orientation identification options
- Jefferson’s existing mandatory SOGI education module
- The Welcome Packet for professionals seeking Affirming Clinician Certification

Based on these findings, we developed a training for SKCCC staff, faculty, and trainees highlighting asexual patient experiences, misconceptions about asexuality, and information about asexual patients regarding cancer screening and care

#### Outcome

##### Jefferson’s mandatory SOGI Training

- Excluded asexuality, despite our EMR including this option for self-identification

##### The Affirming Clinician Training Welcome Packet

- Mentioned asexuality but provided little additional information, despite being intended to provide affirming care for LGBTQIA+ individuals
- Some of the training materials used the acronym LGBTQIA+ when referencing information from studies without data on asexual individuals

##### Our training presentation

- The live, hybrid training included 50+ attendees
- Post-meeting feedback was positive
- A recording was shared with those unable to attend
- Once the Gender and Sexuality Program Enterprise Manager was made aware of the lack of asexual inclusion in the Affirming Clinician Training, the training developed was added to the Welcome Packet

### Lessons Learned and Future Directions

Asexuality training at SKCCC was nearly nonexistent prior to our efforts

We’d like to provide further training internally and collaborate with other cancer centers to explore asexual representation in their SOGI trainings

Misleading use of LGBTQIA+ acronym

During the creation of our training, we noted an illusion of inclusion created by increasing use of the acronym LGBTQIA+ in trainings and research, wherein asexuality was included only in the acronym

Further investigation needed to gauge the extent of these problems

Research on asexual patient experiences, outcomes in cancer screening and care, and inclusion in cancer clinical trials is needed to understand the needs of this patient population

### Citations

1. Decker, J. S. (2014). *The Invisible Orientation: An Introduction to Asexuality*. Skyhorse Publishing.
2. International Asexuality Day (IAD). (2021). International Asexuality Day (IAD). Retrieved May 6, 2025 from <https://internationalasexualityday.org/en/>
3. Benoit, Y., & De Santos, R. (2023). Ace in the UK. Stonewall. <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/ace-report>
4. Valanis, B. G. (2000). Sexual orientation and health: Comparisons in the women’s health initiative sample. *Archives of Family Medicine*, 9(9), 843-853. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archfam.9.9.843>
5. Kerr, L., Bourne, A., Hill, A. O., McNair, R., Wyatt, K., Lyons, A., Carman, M., & Amos, N. (2023). Cervical screening among LGBTQ people: How affirming services may aid in achieving cervical cancer elimination targets. *Women & Health*, 63(9), 736-746. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03630242.2023.2263594>

### View Our Training Here

Scan this QR code to download the PowerPoint slides and/or meeting recording from our 2024 education for International Asexuality Day and to provide feedback, if interested

