In 2018, the Supreme Court of India struck down Section 377 of the country’s penal code, decriminalizing homosexuality. However, many LGBTQIA+ Indians continue to face de facto discrimination. For example, there are still numerous barriers that prevent LGBTQIA+ identifying individuals from accessing medical treatment or cause them to receive lower standards of care. Indian healthcare providers who are interested in better serving this community have indicated a lack of tools and resources to do so.

### INTRODUCTION

**Discrimination**
- Gender norms
- Fear and anxiety
- Social distance labels

**Lack of Knowledge Among Providers**
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Access to mental health services
- Stigma associated with mental health services
- Resources and training
- Recognition of LGBTQIA+ identities

**Stigma**

### METHODS

This project relies on a partnership with two Chennai-based NGOs, Nirangal and SAATHII, to assess LGBTQIA+ health resource gaps.

1. Literature Review: Initial research drawing from peer-reviewed journals, books, articles, films, and websites to gain comprehensive understanding of field.
2. Virtual Interviews: In-depth interviews with Indian healthcare providers, peer counselors, and LGBTQIA+ community members.
3. App Testing and Curriculum Refinement: Iterative design process to develop nine app-based LGBTQIA+ curriculum modules modules based on qualitative data.

### APP DEVELOPMENT

Our team built a mobile application and website targeted at local Chennai healthcare professionals to deliver an adapted LGBTQIA+ curriculum. Since India leads the world in accessing the internet through mobile devices, we believe using technology to distribute this information can serve as an accessible and effective way to provide resources to clinicians.

The following features were implemented:
- Individual curriculum modules, each addressing a separate aspect of LGBTQIA+ healthcare
- An index of culturally-specific terms commonly used in LGBTQIA+ healthcare
- Search function for modules and index
- Intuitive user interface providing easy access to each of the features

The backend of the app was designed so that collaborators can easily add and modify content.

### FINDINGS

- Major issues related to LGBTQIA+ healthcare access and provision of services: fear of judgment, invisibility of LGBTQIA+ health topics in medical education, loss of trust between patients and providers, lack in understanding of stressors unique to identities/subcultures within the LGBTQIA+ community, and stigmatization of mental health care.
- Necessary provider skill sets include the need to approach patients as equals, engage in sensitive history taking, and maintain patient confidentiality.
- COVID-19 has expanded access to telecounseling, increasing comfort around the intersection of technology and health.

### DISCUSSION

- The curriculum modules provide a foundational educational platform for clinicians to broadly understand LGBTQIA+ health and social care needs.
- Additional instructional and awareness building resources are needed to help bridge disparities faced by India’s LGBTQIA+ communities.
- Sensitization trainings should involve all members of a comprehensive care team who interact with patients.

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