



Lesbian Health and Research Center
at UCSF

Annual Report
2003-2004

August, 2004

Dear Supporter,

We mark the celebration of our five years as the Lesbian Health Research Center (LHRC) at the University of California at San Francisco with this first Annual Report.

It has been a momentous beginning, despite the many challenges of limited resources. We have created an institution for lesbians not available anywhere else in the world. LHRC not only contributes research results to improve the health of lesbians (see page 12 for the 30 research papers on lesbian health published by our research affiliates this year), but also provides the local community with education about lesbian health through our salons and annual conference, and provides the world with information on lesbian health through our website, which now receives about 50,000 hits per month not only from the United States but from other countries as well.

This year we have hosted visiting scholars at LHRC in lesbian health from the United States and abroad, as well as clinicians from other countries, analyzing how we approach lesbian health to take ideas back to their own countries on how to improve health care for lesbians. This year also was important, in that we produced the first teaching module for UCSF medical students on LGBT health, and measured knowledge and attitudes before and after the module. The results showed a definite improvement in the knowledge and attitudes of these future physicians after being taught using the module, not only in being more open to treating transgender patients, but also in understanding that most lesbians are in committed relationships, that young people usually come out to a non-parent adult as the first adult, and that lesbians have specific barriers to access for health care.

We can continue our endeavors at LHRC only with your help. The grant funding for lesbian health research is next to non-existent, as are program grants. We are grateful to our donors who have sustained us over the past years. Together we must continue this important work, not only for the current generation, but for future generations as well, so we can reach our goal that all members of our community have access to health care, and knowledge about prevention and treatment for illness.

Join us in our work, whether as a donor, volunteer, researcher or health practitioner! We need you!

Sincerely,

Suzanne Dibble, DNSc, RN

Patty Robertson, MD

Co-Directors, The Center for Lesbian Health Research at UCSF

Highlights

The Fourth Annual Lesbian Health Conference, presented in partnership with the National Center for Lesbian Rights, brought together 150 attendees to explore the intersection of health and legal issues in an LBTQ person's life.

Thirty lesbian health research papers were published by our affiliate researchers on topics including: breast cancer, substance use/abuse, woman-to-women sexually transmitted infections, parenting, OB/GYN care, reproductive health and LBTQ youth health concerns.

The website experienced astounding growth, receiving over 450,000 hits during the past year, and demonstrated the value of using the internet as a cornerstone of our lesbian health education efforts.

The first module on LGBT health issues was taught to second year UCSF medical students, which marked the addition of LGBT-specific training to their curriculum.

The Salon Series, founded this past year, created an informal setting for lesbians to educate themselves about their health. The monthly series featured a lesbian health expert on each topic speaking at a private home with 8 - 30 women in attendance.

The Center played host to clinicians, researchers and students from the United States, Australia, Japan and Sweden who took advantage of LHRC's resources both to facilitate academic writing and in the creation of direct care programs back home.

Supervisor Bevan Duffy convened the Lesbian Health Hearings in San Francisco City Hall, where LHRC's Co-Directors testified with leaders from other Bay Area LBTQ health organizations in order to raise awareness about lesbian health concerns and to make a case for further funding of lesbian-targeted health initiatives.

The Dibble/DeJoseph Fund was founded by LHRC's Co-Director Suzanne Dibble and her partner Jeanne DeJoseph to provide pilot research money for students pursuing lesbian health related projects.

Our Co-Director Suzanne Dibble, DNSc, RN, won the Chancellor's Award for GLBT Faculty leadership from the University of California at San Francisco.



LHRC Co-Directors Patricia Robertson (l) and Suzanne Dibble (r) celebrate our fourth birthday.

Education

LHRC's unique approach calls for tackling disparities in lesbian health care at every level of the health care system. This is reflected in our educational efforts, which seek to inform researchers, care providers, policy makers, educators and the general public. This multi-pronged approach distinguishes LHRC as a research institution.

In addition to our commitment to contributing to the body of academic lesbian health literature, we are simultaneously dedicated to providing pathways for this information to reach the public.

**Our educational projects include:
www.lesbianhealthinfo.org**

Annual Lesbian Health Research Conference

Salon Series

LBTQ Medical School Curriculum



Co-founder Dixie Horning shares a meal with Dr. Sheryl Goldberg and Sylvia Israel at an LHRC-sponsored healthy potluck.

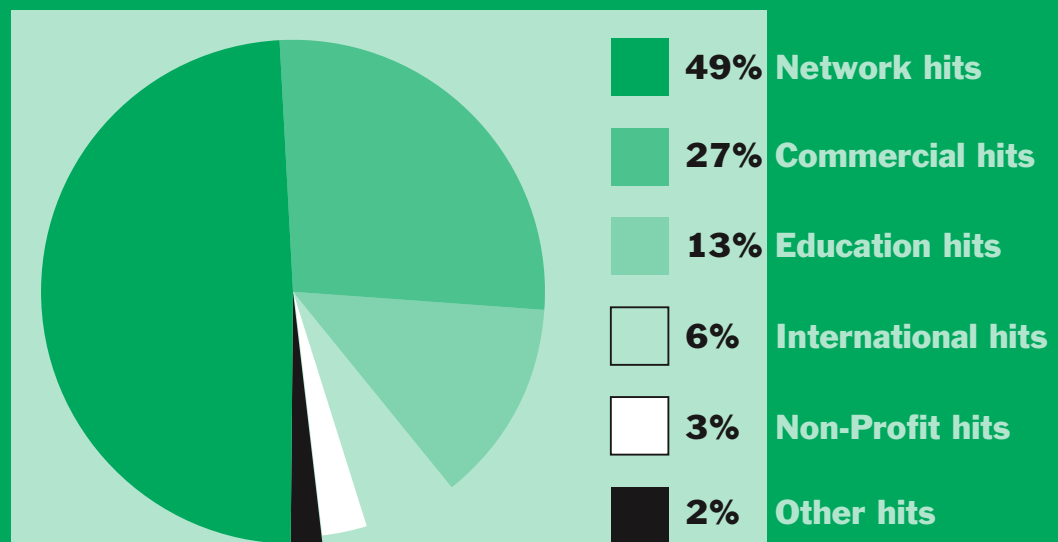
www.lesbianhealthinfo.org

is the cornerstone of our educational efforts. We view the internet as an invaluable tool to provide thousands of women with access to lesbian health information. The astounding growth of our website over the past year indicates that we are on the right track.

The number of users to our site doubled from January – June in comparison to July – December. Over the past year our site logged over 50,000 visiting users with over 450,000 hits.

This constitutes an average of 1200 hits each day.

The range of people using our site include: educational institutions, community members and non-profits. A significant international segment reflects LHRC's success at tackling lesbian health at the international level.



Key features of our website include:

Ask the MD

An interactive feature where site users lesbian health questions are sent to experts in the field and responded to within 48 hours. The site receives about two questions per week. It has been utilized by both care providers and the public.

“Thanks for all of the information you gave me. I really appreciate your help in clearing up this question... and will definitely pass this information along to my health care provider.”

Your Health

Provides lesbian-oriented health information on a range of topics such as depression, hormone replacement therapy, alternative insemination and sexually transmitted infections.

Your Research

Includes links to recently published lesbian health-related research, information about studies in need of participants, and lists of ongoing lesbian health-related studies.

Event Calendar

Keeps our site users posted about upcoming LHRC-sponsored events including our Salon Series, Annual Conference and fundraising efforts.

Annual Lesbian Health Research Conference

LESBIANS, HEALTH, AND THE LAW - June 19th, 2004

This year's topic, "Lesbians, Health, and the Law," focused on the growing need for lesbians to educate themselves on various health and legal issues so that they may better protect themselves and their families.

The Lesbian Health Research Center partnered with the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) to present our 4th Annual Lesbian Health Research Conference.

Very informative and self-affirming day!

By encouraging both informed professionals and the curious public to attend, the conference provided a wonderful forum for the two communities to discuss and explore topics such as alternative insemination and adoption, sexually transmitted infections, and legal issues pertinent to lesbian women and their families.

Thanks for a wonderful conference!

LGBT Medical School Curriculum

This past year LHRC was instrumental in the addition of an LGBT component to the UCSF Medical School curriculum. Having health care providers trained in LGBT health is vital for the delivery of culturally sensitive and appropriate health care for lesbian women and others. LHRC believes that including this training in required medical school curriculums is the best way to ensure that all future physicians are sensitive to the health needs of LGBT patients. The two hour component included:

A panel presentation by an elderly gay veteran, a middle-aged lesbian administrator and a young transgender female to male activist.

A question and answer session between the panel and students

Small group breakout sessions with an LGBT faculty member in which the medical students worked through three problem-based cases. The first case was about a lesbian couple, one of whom discovered she had a breast mass after weaning their one year old daughter. The second case was a gay business man who traveled frequently and had gastro-intestinal problems. The third case was a 16 year old girl who presented with a rash on her chest, which was secondary to binding her breasts with duct tape to pass at school as a boy, unbeknownst to her family.

In addition to the new curriculum module, LHRC also spearheaded a survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the new component. The medical students were assessed before and after the LGBT section to assess any changes in their understanding and attitudes towards LGBT people as a result of the training. The data indicated that the training significantly improved knowledge and attitudes about LGBT health issues.

Salon series

The LHRC's Salon Series was initiated in the fall of 2003 as a way to informally discuss various issues that are important to lesbian health. For each salon, a friend of the LHRC offers their home as a meeting place for both community members and health care providers. In this comfortable and relaxed environment, women are encouraged to ask questions, share their experiences, and offer advice in efforts to better educate the lesbian community.

- **Grandparenting in the Lesbian Community**
- **Breast Cancer Risk among Lesbians**
- **Lesbian Health in Australia:**
Lesbian Sexuality Down-Under
- **To Be in Civil Union or Not To Be:**
A Comparison of Same-Sex Couples in Civil Unions, Their Lesbian/Gay Friends in Civil Unions, and their Married Heterosexual Siblings
- **Heart Disease Risk Among Lesbians**
- **Film: What Makes Life Worth Living? Liberty:**
3 Stories about Life and Death
- **Lesbian Mental Health: What's Different?**
- **How Homophobia Impacts LGBT Health**

Research

Promoting and facilitating lesbian health research is at the core of LHRC's mission.

In order to create awareness and enhance clinical practice, the health data needs to exist to support these efforts. As a part of the University of California, San Francisco, a distinguished leader in health sciences, LHRC is uniquely positioned to fulfill this part of its mission. LHRC helps researchers at every level of the process, including: connecting students with mentors, grant writing, housing researchers on sabbatical and granting access to existing lesbian health research through our library.

LHRC is determined to fill

the lesbian health information gap

that exists in the current literature.

Publications

Published papers are the last phase in health research. They are the culmination of years of work that include: study design, grant writing, study implementation and data analysis.

Here are two examples of LHRC researcher studies:

THE FAMILY ACCEPTANCE PROJECT

is a community research and provider training initiative to study the impact of family acceptance and rejection on the health and development of lesbian, gay and bisexual and transgender youth who identify as LGBT. Results will be used to help families provide support for non-heterosexual youth, to increase awareness of their needs, and to train providers to improve the quality of services and care they receive. The project is funded by the California Endowment. Additional funders include: the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Casey Family Programs. The Family Acceptance Project team includes LHRC researcher Caitlin Ryan as Project Director. More information about this project can be found at <http://familyproject.sfsu.edu>.

THE BLACK LESBIAN ELDER SPEAK PROJECT

The Black Lesbian Elder Speak Project started April 11-13th, 2003 in Los Angeles, California at the ZUNA Institute's National Black Lesbian Conference. Health data were collected from lesbians who attended the conference, ninety percent of whom were from California. The health survey and the focus group questions for this assessment were proposed and evaluated by a community-academic partnership between Progressive Research & Training for Action (PRTA), ZUNA, Lyon Martin Women's Health Services and the Lesbian Health Research Center. The proposal received human subject approval from the University of California, San Francisco before any data were collected. The California Endowment supported the Black Lesbian Elder Speak Project at this conference through their grant to PRTA to help elder Californian African American lesbians to attend this conference. We have spent this past year analyzing and disseminating the results of the survey and the qualitative focus group data gathered at the conference. LHRC researchers and activists involved in this project include: Brenda Crawford, Maria Cora, Suzanne Dibble, & Doretha Williams Flournoy.

Publications

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Visiting Scholars Program



Maria Cora (LHRC Executive Committee member) chats with Nicole Silverstolpe-Ghatan, a Senior Midwife visiting from Sweden. Nicole is interested in improving the quality of obstetric care provided to the LGTB community in Sweden and is in town to learn more about LHRC's work.

Our visiting scholars program provides a home for researchers to pursue their work while on sabbatical. This program is vital to promoting lesbian health research at the academic level, which is at the heart of LHRC's mission. Through temporarily housing scholars at UCSF we give them access to our lesbian health library, which includes many articles that are difficult for researchers to get their hands on, thus improving the quality of their research. This partnership does a lot to promote lesbian health research and also creates an opportunity for experts in the field to share their work with the Bay Area Community.

LAST YEAR'S VISITING SCHOLARS WERE:

ESTHER ROTHBLUM, PHD, Professor of Psychology at the University of Vermont and Editor of the Journal of Lesbian Studies. Her research and writing have focused on lesbian mental health. She is former chair of the Committee on Lesbian and Gay Concerns of the American Psychological Association. She received the 1991 Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award from the Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian and Gay Issues, and also served as President of this division. Dr. Rothblum has edited over 20 books, including *Lesbian Friendships* (New York University Press, 1996), *Preventing Heterosexism and Homophobia* (Sage Publications), *Lesbians in Academia* (Routledge, 1997), *Boston Marriages: Romantic But Asexual Relationships Among Contemporary Lesbians* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1993) and *Loving Boldly: Issues Facing Lesbians* (Haworth Press, 1989).

RUTH McNAIR, MD, Lecturer and Director of Undergraduate Education at the University of Melbourne, Department of General Practice. She is also the Academic Mentor for the School of Medicine, which involves the provision of personal support for individual students. Her research interests include health inequalities for minorities including lesbians. Dr McNair now works as an inner urban general practitioner with special interests in women's health and lesbian health. She is actively involved in both the Ministerial Advisory Committee Gay and Lesbian Health (Victoria) and the Attorney General's Committee on Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Issues. She has recently been appointed to the AMA Victoria Women and Medicine Reference Group, which provides advice on female doctors' issues to the AMA Board.

RHONDA BROWN, Family therapist, counselor and registered nurse currently working in private practice and at The Bouverie Centre, Victorian Family Institute, Australia. She has extensive experience in health and community services, particularly in women's and young people's health and mental health. In 2000 she conducted a consultation for the Royal Women's Hospital exploring lesbian access to health information services. Rhonda is currently undertaking a PhD exploring the experience of lesbian families.

Visitors

LHRC also hosts clinicians and researchers interested in lesbian health for shorter visits. Our work provides a unique resource in the public health system because we are the only research organization concerned solely with lesbian health in the world. As a result, people interested in lesbian health care come from all over to learn about our work and gain insight for their own projects. Last year LHRC played host for:

NICOLE SILVERSTOLPE-GHATAN, Senior Midwife at Danderyds Hospital who visited LHRC for two days to discuss the obstetric care of LGBT families. A doctor-friend in Los Angeles who knew that Nicole was interested in improving the quality of obstetric care for the LGTB community in Sweden introduced Nicole to Dr. Patricia Robertson's recent article on "Offering High Quality Ob-Gyn Care to Your Lesbian Patients" in *Contemporary Ob-Gyn*, which had been distributed to thousands of doctors across the United States. Nicole then visited the LHRC web site, www.lesbianhealthinfo.org, and, fascinated by the projects of LHRC, decided to visit LHRC in San Francisco herself this past February. Nicole herself is heterosexual and the mother of four children in Stockholm.

My visit to LHRC was also wonderful in that as birth professionals, we easily understood what the issues were (for lesbian and gay parents) despite the language challenges at times, as these are world-wide issues.

JENNY KELLY PHD, Registered nurse and midwife. She holds a Bachelor of Nursing, Graduate Diploma of Education (Adult), Master of Arts (Women's Studies) and has her PhD from Deakin University, School of Social and International Studies. Jenny has worked for many years in women's health in a variety of roles and locations throughout Australia. Presently she is employed as a sessional lecturer at Deakin University and is also employed by Barwon Health (Victoria) where she works part time as a Domiciliary Midwife.

Student Projects 2003-2004

LHRC works with students interested in the field of lesbian health by providing mentors, resources and support in order to create a new generation of lesbian health researchers. Last year LHRC worked with these students.

EMILY NEWFIELD is completing a research paper on "Female to Male Transgender Quality of Life." The paper with Dr. Lori Kohler will be submitted for publication shortly. This project is being done as part of her Masters Degree in Public Health.

EVE ZARITSKY, MD is completing a research paper on health behaviors of elder lesbians. This paper with Dr. Suzanne Dibble will be submitted for publication in the fall of 2004. This project is being done as part of her residency in Obstetrics/Gynecology at UCSF.

HELEN SMITH is completing a research paper on "Mixed Race Couples Planning Alternative Insemination." The project is for her Masters' thesis in the Human Sexuality Studies program at San Francisco State University. Ms. Smith is currently pursuing her doctorate at the University of Pittsburgh focusing on cardiovascular risk factors in lesbians.

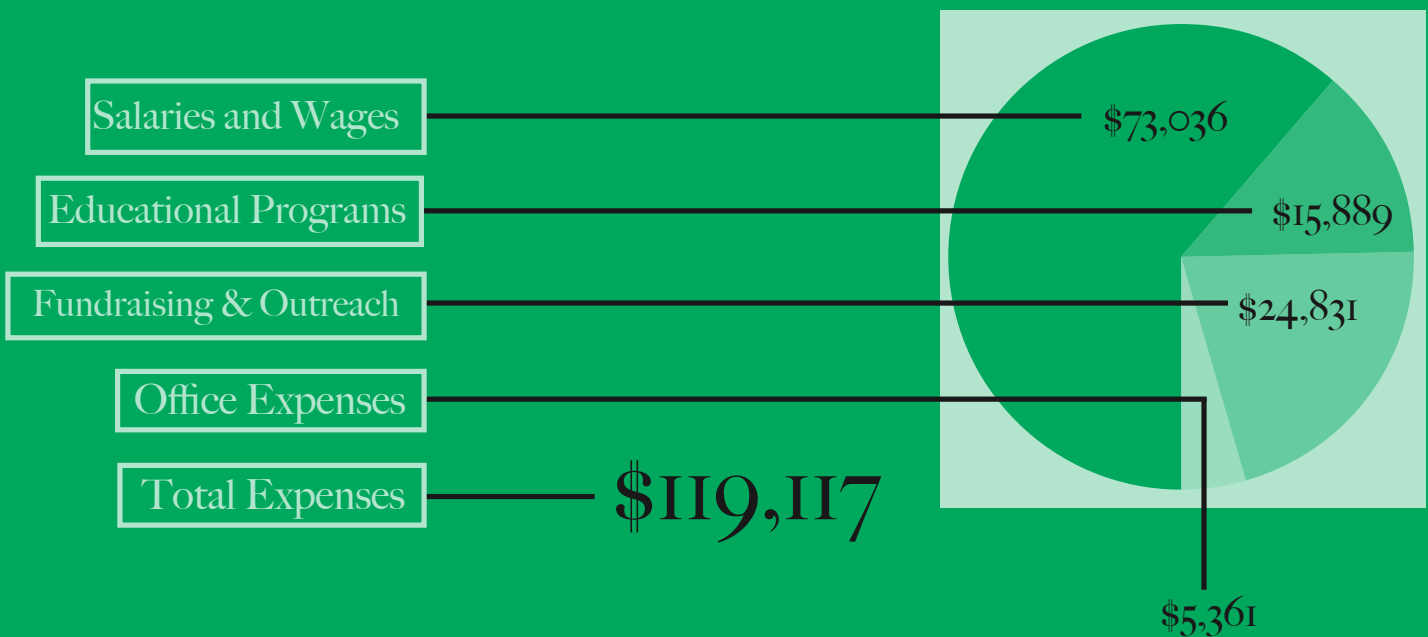
JOEL JOHNSON, MD completed a research paper on "Sexual and Physical Abuse: A Comparison between Lesbians and Their Heterosexual Sisters." The paper with Drs. Norman Fineman and Suzanne Dibble has been submitted to the *Journal of Counseling & Clinical Psychology*. This project was done as part of his coursework for medical school. He is the son of two lesbian moms and will start his residency in psychiatry.

NORIKO SATO, RN is completing a research paper on "Health Behaviors: Asian American lesbians and their heterosexual sisters." This project was done as part of her coursework for her master's degree in Nursing. Ms. Sato is from Japan.

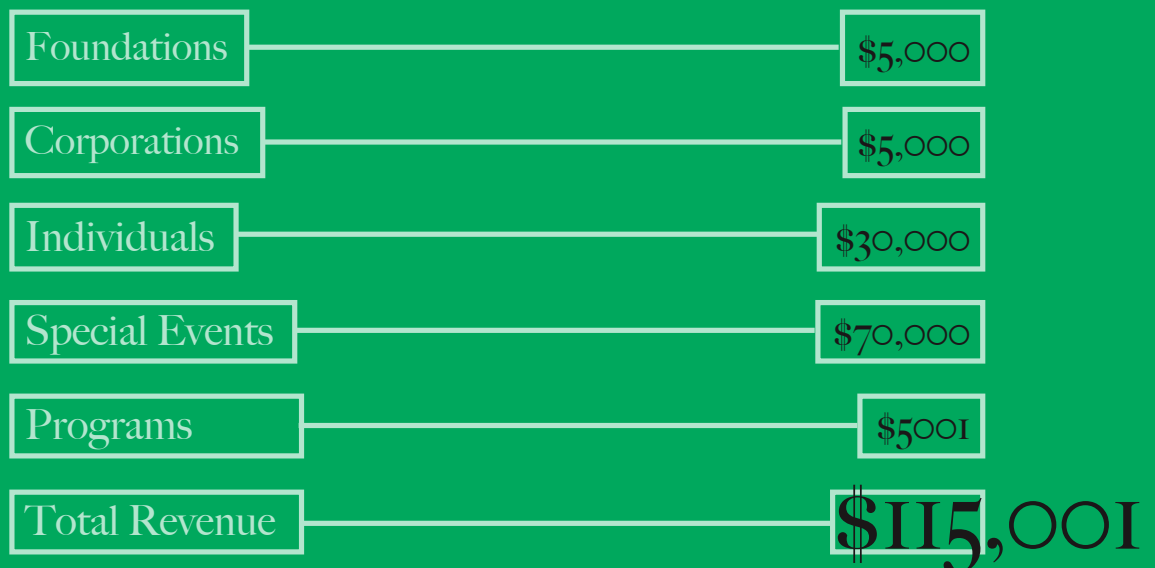
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Fiscal Year 2003-2004

Expenses



Revenue



We want to extend our deepest thanks and appreciation to our donors. These are the people who provide the majority of our operating budget and

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Our Mission

The mission of the Lesbian Health Research Center is to enhance clinical practice and inform policy about the health care needs of and delivery of services to lesbians, bisexual, queer women, and transgendered individuals through a program of research, postgraduate education and training, and public service.

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