

## Talking Points

### The Medical Facts

#### **Medical care for gender dysphoria is evidence-based, medically necessary, and life saving.<sup>1,2</sup>**

*Hormone therapy is safe, well studied, and improves mental health.* Evidence-based medical care for gender dysphoria is crucial for the well-being and survival of individuals experiencing it. Hormone therapy, a safe and extensively researched treatment, has been shown to improve mental health. A two-year study published in 2023 revealed significant reductions in depression and anxiety symptoms, as well as increased life satisfaction, among transgender adolescents who received hormone therapy.<sup>3</sup>

*Puberty blockers are safe, well studied, and improve mental health.* Similarly, puberty blockers have been demonstrated to be both safe and beneficial for mental health. A study from 2022 indicated a substantial decrease in odds of depression (60% decrease) and suicidality (73% decrease) among transgender youth who began puberty delay medications or hormone therapy.<sup>4</sup> These medications have been effectively utilized for decades to address gender dysphoria and other conditions such as precocious puberty. In addition, reported impacts on bone mineralization and fertility have been found to be reversible upon cessation.

*Prompt access to care leads to improved outcomes.* Timely access to care significantly improves outcomes for transgender patients. A randomized controlled trial published in 2023 demonstrated that immediate access to hormone therapy led to a 52% reduction in suicidality, compared with a 5% decrease in those who had delayed treatment. Prompt access was also associated with a notable decrease in depression and gender dysphoria.<sup>5</sup>

*Restricting access to care hurts trans patients.* Restrictive policies regarding access to care have detrimental effects on transgender patients' mental health. A survey from 2022 revealed that 86% of transgender youth experienced adverse impacts on their mental

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<sup>1</sup>Understanding Medically Necessary Care for Transgender People. Whitman Walker. November 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Facts Addressing Disinformation about Transgender Health. Whitman Walker. October 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Chen, D., Berona, J., Chan, Y. M., et al. (2023). Psychosocial Functioning in Transgender Youth after 2 Years of Hormones. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 388(3):240-250.

<sup>4</sup> Tordoff, D. M., Wanta, J. W., Collin, A., et al. (2022). Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care. *JAMA Network Open*, 5(2):e220978.

<sup>5</sup> Nolan, B. J., Zwickl, S., Locke, P., Zajac, J. D., Cheung, A. S. (2023). Early Access to Testosterone Therapy in Transgender and Gender-Diverse Adults Seeking Masculinization: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA Network Open*, 6(9):e2331919.

well-being due to state laws limiting transgender rights.<sup>6</sup> A 2020 study showed worse psychological outcomes in transgender adolescents who did not receive appropriate medical treatment compared to peers with access to care,<sup>7</sup> and a 2022 study showed higher odds of suicidality in transgender adults that did not have access to care as teenagers.<sup>8</sup>

*Regret is extremely rare for gender-affirming care.* Instances of regret regarding gender-affirming care are exceedingly rare. A 2022 systematic review including nearly 8,000 patients found regret rates of around 1%, significantly lower than many common medical procedures, including joint replacements.<sup>9</sup>

*No medical interventions occur prior to puberty.* Medical interventions are not started for children before puberty, and gender-affirming care is tailored to be age-appropriate and individualized. During puberty, the conventional approach for many years has involved utilizing reversible medications to temporarily halt the onset of puberty. For older transgender adolescents, hormone therapy may commence following discussions with their healthcare provider and parents.<sup>10</sup>

*Gender-affirming surgery is not performed on children.* Procedures such as gender-affirming surgery are exceptionally rare for adolescents and are only considered after extensive consultations with medical professionals and parents.<sup>11</sup> Less than 800 transgender adolescents underwent chest surgery between 2019-2021, which accounts for only 0.3% of the transgender adolescent population.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Issues Impacting LGBTQ Youth. (2020). The Trevor Project.

[https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wpcontent/uploads/2023/01/Issues-Impacting-LGBTQ-Youth-MC-Poll\\_Public-2.pdf](https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wpcontent/uploads/2023/01/Issues-Impacting-LGBTQ-Youth-MC-Poll_Public-2.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> van der Miesen, A. I. R., Steensma, T. D., de Vries, A. L. C., et al. (2020). Psychological Functioning in Transgender Adolescents Before and After Gender-Affirmative Care Compared with Cisgender General Population Peers. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 66(6):699-704.

<sup>8</sup> Turban JL, King D, Kobe J, Reisner SL, & Keuroghlian AS. (2022). Access to gender-affirming hormones during adolescence and mental health outcomes among transgender adults. *PloS One*, 18(6): e0287283.

<sup>9</sup> Bustos VP, Bustos SS, Mascaro A, et al. (2021). Regret after Gender-Affirmation Surgery: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Prevalence. *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Global Open*, 9(3), e3477.

<sup>10</sup>

<https://www.whitman-walker.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Understanding-Medically-Necessary-Care-for-Transgender-People-1.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Coleman E, Radix AE, Bouman WP, et al. (2022). Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 23(Suppl 1), S1–S259.

<sup>12</sup> Respaut R, Terhune C. (Oct 6, 2022). Putting numbers on the rise in children seeking gender care. <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-transyouth-data/>

## The Policy Landscape

### **Patients and their doctors and their families should be making these decisions—not politicians.**

*Legislators should not practice medicine.* Decisions regarding transgender healthcare should be made by patients, in consultation with their doctors and families, not by politicians. Attempts to restrict access to gender-affirming care undermine the rights of transgender individuals and endanger their mental health. Leading medical organizations advocate for evidence-based care and oppose governmental interference in the patient-doctor relationship.

*Trans people have a right to bodily autonomy.* Transgender individuals have the right to bodily autonomy and access to healthcare that aligns with their needs and identity. Efforts by politicians to regulate transgender bodies infringe upon these rights and must be opposed. Every day, more and more politicians are banning abortion, endangering women and denying them the freedom to know what's best for their own life. Now, those same politicians are trying to ban transgender people from making decisions about their own bodies, denying them the freedom to access the health care that is right for them. We must fight back against these efforts to control our bodies and our lives.

*Major medical organizations overwhelmingly support access to gender-affirming care.* Major medical associations overwhelmingly support access to gender-affirming care and oppose government intrusion into medical decision-making. The American Medical Association (AMA), the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Endocrine Society, among many other medical organizations, emphasize the importance of evidence-based care and the preservation of patient autonomy in medical treatment.<sup>13 14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> American Medical Association. (2021). AMA reinforces opposition to restrictions on transgender medical care.

<https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/press-releases/ama-reinforces-opposition-restrictions-transgender-medical-care>

<sup>14</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics. (2021). American Academy of Pediatrics Speaks Out Against Bills Harming Transgender Youth.

<https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2021/american-academy-of-pediatrics-speaksout-against-bills-harming-transgender-youth/>