



PHOTOS BY ELLENA ROSENTHAL

Deven Ferte, above, is the manager of health care operations at Prism Health. At right, Ari Chadwick-Saund said the depth of understanding at Prism goes beyond other health care providers that don't specialize in LGBTQ+ needs.

judgment they receive as "the gay person" in their home town.

Ferte said the lack of understanding, stigma and judgment directed at the LGBTQ+ community comes not just from health care providers, but also from insurance companies that take their claims.

"If someone was assigned female at birth yet identifies as male and still has their cervix, they may need annual pap smears," Ferte said. "If we were to list their sex at birth as male, that claim would not be paid because the insurance would see it and say, 'Why is a male getting a pap smear?' And this creates a very uncomfortable situation for the patient."

Although Prism specializes in care for the LGBTQ+ community, it doesn't exclude others.

"We do see straight people!" Ferte said with a grin. "I think people see that we are focusing so much on the LGBTQ+ community and people who are heterosexual call and say, 'Hi, I'm looking for a new primary care provider. I notice that you guys specialize in gay people or the gay community, but I'm straight, will you see me, too?'"

Prism's intake forms are the most encompassing and comprehensive medical forms some patients have ever seen.

For instance, there are nine different options for a person's gender identity: male, female, trans male, trans female, two-spirit, gender non-conforming, non-binary, decline, another, and a patient can check all that may apply when it comes to their race and ethnicity.

Prism also documents every patient's sexual orientation, gender identity, pronoun and preferred name. A disclaimer is included in new patient paperwork that explains why Prism asks for a patient's assigned sex at birth, gender identity, legal name and the name they go by.

"Many of our patients have a legal name that is used for their insurance, but they have another name they go by. We work hard to collect this information in a way that

"Would a heterosexual person be given a mental health referral if they asked for birth control pills? No, that would never happen. Yet when people in our community want to be proactive about their sexual health, they are labeled as mentally unwell."

DEVEN FERTE, MANAGER AT PRISM HEALTH

is respectful and affirming to our patients," she said.

"Prism is Oregon's first comprehensive standalone primary practice. Everyone from the receptionist to the biller on the opposite end are people trained for the needs of the community, and understand the importance of things like gender identity and pronouns, said Tyler TerMeer, the executive director at CAP. "We've designed our intake forms around patients' visions. The visual and physical [experience] is by and for the community."

"Don't mind me sobbing over medical forms because they're so inclusive," wrote Ari Chadwick-Saund, a queer optician, on Facebook.

As she waited for her new-patient appointment at Prism, she took a picture of the intake form and shared it on social media. Chadwick-Saund told Street Roots that she is usually allowed to mark only one race on typical intake forms even though she's multiracial.

Chadwick-Saund was at Portland's Pride festival when she came across Prism's booth. She could have been knocked over with a feather, she said. She did not expect to see something like Prism in Oregon's health care landscape.

"There's a lot of lack of understanding about the problems that face this community of individuals," she said. "It's intersections - class, race, gender identity, politics, religion - the queer community is very, very broad. It can be hard with a community that's marginalized that you

know nothing about to custom-tailor medical care towards them. That's why Prism is so important."

Because of a grant from the Oregon Community Foundation, Prism will offer culturally specific mental health services during the first half of 2018.

"We've heard a lot of folks talking about the need for LGBTQ+ centered mental health services. This will be a great opportunity to fulfill some of these requests for (patients) who may want to talk about what's it like to be LGBTQ+," said TerMeer.

ONLINE

In the health care system, transgender people routinely face discrimination, harassment, poor medical care or none at all. In Portland, low-income clinics have pioneered safe health care for these patients. Read Street Roots' previous coverage at news.streetroots.org/transhealthcare

of Elena Moon and her team at Osage Orange, a human-centered design studio based in Portland.

One part of designing Prism included research conducted by Osage Orange. Their team of four, all queer-identified themselves, spoke to community members to better understand their health care needs and experiences. Osage Orange was particularly interested in hearing from transgender and queer people of color in the Portland area, as these communities have historically less

access to appropriate and affirmative health care. Osage Orange worked from October to February on the project and informed the design through interviews with 11 people, where they learned about challenges experienced within the existing medical system and what an ideal primary health care clinic would look and feel like. Toward the end of the design process, Osage Orange shared ideas for the center's name, logo design, health care experience, staffing and interior for feedback.

"We found a lot of people in the queer community feel socially isolated," Moon said. "People want safe spaces with like-minded people and opportunities to connect. We wanted to create a warm, non-clinical environment where somebody would want to spend time, a place where you can hang out."

Chadwick-Saund receives her primary care at Prism and attains more specialized care at Oregon Health & Science University. She acknowledges that this is a privilege; having access to multiple care providers, as her employer pays for her health insurance.

Chadwick-Saund is most impressed with how she feels included and in control of her care at Prism, along with the amount of compassion and kindness used in exam rooms. She said that a part of this inclusiveness comes from having people who identify as queer work in the health care field; "it brings more inclusiveness to the health care realm."

"There was no judgment and no stressful situations. Everyone was very calm, and there was a very good flow in the office; the baton passes were seamless, and the way the medical providers communicate with each other was seamless as well," Chadwick-Saund said.

"My provider responded really well to understanding the possible health side effects of abuse," she added. "I have medical conditions that are kind of rare, so I lobbed

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