

0547

## **Beginnings of the Network for LGBTQAI+ Concerns in Occupational Therapy in the United States**

Peggy Martin<sup>1</sup>, Wanda Mahoney<sup>3</sup>, Christine Peters<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, <sup>2</sup>University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, USA, <sup>3</sup>Midwestern University, Chicago, Illinois, USA

**Introduction:** This historical research describes how the United States *Network for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Asexual, Intersex, plus (LGBTQAI+) Concerns in Occupational Therapy (the Network)* impacted occupational therapists as professionals and as practitioners. Historically, LGBTQAI+ occupational therapists did not disclose their sexual or gender orientation to feel safe amongst colleagues blinded to the health and occupational disparities in their LGBTQAI+ patients.

**Objectives:** Attendees will learn how the *Network*, formed by a handful of LGB occupational therapists in 1992, embraced diversity within occupational therapy to promote culturally effective intervention while affirming the value of LGB practitioners within the profession. Learners will understand how the early 1990's sociopolitical context within the U.S. along with the unmet needs of LGB patients and occupational therapists gave rise to the *Network*, an organization that continues its work today.

**Method:** Researchers reviewed primary sources archived from the *Network's* beginning, including presentations, letters, and early publications of their newsletter. Oral histories were also obtained from *Network* founders and one focus group was conducted to learn of its impact.

**Results:** Results tell the story of the beginning of the *Network*, a group that provided a safe place for LGB practitioners to find each other and to unitedly promote culturally effective practice.

**Conclusion:** This story informs occupational therapy about the importance of professional groups to support diversity among practitioners and to deliver culturally sensitive practice.