



Title: Healthcare access of sexual minorities in Hong Kong and Mainland China: a scoping review

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Abstract:

Objectives: Previous research has revealed significant health inequalities among sexual minority populations due to the prevalence of perceived and systemic barriers affecting their access to healthcare services. This scoping review aims to examine existing literature pertaining to the barriers to healthcare access and utilization of sexual minorities in Hong Kong and Mainland China.

Method: We conducted a comprehensive search for full-text articles in the English language using five electronic databases—Web of Science, PubMed, Embase, PsycINFO and CINAHL+—from their inception to June 14th 2020, for studies reporting on barriers to healthcare access faced by sexual minorities in Hong Kong and Mainland China. No time limits were set on publication date. Four authors screened and independently extracted data from all studies. Using thematic analysis, all included studies were grouped under key themes for further narrative synthesis.

Results: We identified 41 studies to be included in this review. Geographically, most studies were conducted in mainland China (n=36). In terms of the services that were most examined, those on STI testing and/or consulting were most common (n=29). Only four studies focused on transgender individuals and none on intersex individuals. Reviewed studies indicate that sexual minorities generally face difficulties in accessing health services, particularly those dealing with sexual health issues. Thematic analysis identified the following key barriers: privacy & confidentiality concerns; discrimination & stigma and low level of health knowledge between patients and healthcare providers; low perceived health risk; poor quality of healthcare; medical distrust; physical & financial inaccessibility and lack of legal protection. Facilitators to healthcare access were also revealed, including the presence of a strong social support network and knowing someone who is HIV-positive.

Conclusion: The findings of this review highlight the need for further research into healthcare barriers faced by sexual minority sub-populations, especially those who are not represented in existing literature. Additionally, more research is needed on non-STI-related healthcare access and on sexual minorities based in Hong Kong. Possible courses of action for policymakers include: more comprehensive training for healthcare workers, enforcement of relevant anti-discrimination laws and increased funding for STD testing facilities and campaigns."