

OVERCOMING TRANS HEALTH DISPARITIES: TOWARD A CLINICAL VIRTUE EPISTEMOLOGY

Despite recent empirical research that demonstrates the significant health care disparities faced by transgender populations, trans people are still disturbingly underrepresented in medical research and literature, and health care providers are still often inadequately trained or prepared to deal with trans patients' particular health care needs. In this paper, I want to suggest ways in which health care providers can take steps to improve health outcomes for trans patients through epistemic collaboration with their trans patients. I situate the discussion within the context of virtue epistemology, and present a preliminary account of a clinical virtue epistemology that I argue would be useful in creating more functional epistemic environments in health care settings, which are ultimately conducive to improving the kind and quality of care that trans patients receive. I set out the epistemic virtues that health care providers ought to cultivate, while also surveying the epistemic vices which ought to be avoided. Cultivating the epistemic virtues of epistemic humility, epistemic curiosity, and epistemic open-mindedness (cf. Medina 2013), I argue, will help minimize epistemic dysfunction between health care providers and trans patients, and allow health care providers to learn how to better meet their trans patients' often unique health care needs. Insofar as trans patients are further harmed by epistemic failures on behalf of health care providers, I argue that the cultivation of such epistemic virtues is not only a good thing for health care providers to do, but rather is a moral requirement, resulting from the role obligations taken on by their participation in their given social roles as health care providers.