

Dr. Carolyn Wolf-Gould of FoxCare Center's Gender Wellness Center Offers Insights into Rural Transgender Care in New Publication

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Contact: Tim Schaffer, Communications Coordinator

Tel. (607) 547-4775 | timothy.schaffer@bassett.org

Cooperstown, N.Y. – In September, Bassett Healthcare Network's Dr. Carolyn Wolf-Gould published a book chapter about the challenges faced by transgender patients and their medical providers in rural communities. The peer-reviewed piece, entitled "From Margins to Mainstream: Creating a Rural-Based Center of Excellence in Transgender Health for Upstate, New York," distills hard-earned insights from her and her teams' experience working with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Clinical Scholars Program to create FoxCare Center's Gender Wellness Center.

"As a physician, my driving concern is caring for the health and wellbeing of my patients," explains Wolf-Gould. "That begins, of course, with caring for the individual needs of my patients. But the transgender and gender-nonconforming community is chronically underserved by our health system. Caring for them demands more—creating institutions, like the Gender Wellness Center, that help them find the services they need. And also changing the culture and climate of the entire system to include their needs. My hope is that pieces like this might help in that big picture work."

Wolf-Gould contends that the barriers in transgender health can be described as a "wicked problem." Its challenges are complex, systemic and interdisciplinary. Any possible solutions are unclear and require significant time, energy and money to pursue. Her piece describes the Gender Wellness Center's approach to these problems as they have attempted to create a rural-based center of excellence in transgender health. It shares her team's strategic plan and their evaluation of its success.

Although Wolf-Gould concludes that the Gender Wellness Center has not yet attained the level of care necessary to be a center of excellence, she is proud of what the team has learned and accomplished. She wants to see others join them in this good work.

"It's a start," she says in her conclusion. "It's imperfect. We have all kinds of problems and still more to do. We say to you clinicians out there wanting to learn how to offer gender-affirming care from your primary care practice: Go ahead. Do it. All big things start small. You will be profoundly changed by the trek toward this goal. We stand by you, cheering, as you make change happen too."

Wolf-Gould's piece forms chapter six of "Leading Community Based Changes in the Culture of Health in the US," edited by Claudia S.P. Fernandez and Giselle Corbie-Smith at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The open source book is free and available to read or download here: <https://www.intechopen.com/books/8794>.