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NIH Awards Visiting Nurse Service of New York \$3.4 Million for Gender Affirmation Program Landmark Research

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NEW YORK, Aug. 18, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- The [Visiting Nurse Service of New York](#) (VNSNY) [Center for Home Care Policy & Research](#) has been awarded a \$3.4M grant by the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) / National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study the psychosocial well-being and quality of life of individuals after gender affirming surgery. The landmark study will address a significant gap in the current evidence on best practices to support gender minority individuals during a pivotal life course transition.

The VNSNY Research study will be collaboratively co-led by [Miriam Ryvicker, PhD.](#), Senior Research Scientist with the VNSNY Center for Home Care Policy & Research and [Walter Bockting, PhD.](#), Director of the Program for the Study of LGBT Health at the Columbia University School of Nursing and the New York State Psychiatric Institute / Columbia Psychiatry.

“This funding helps to strengthen the evidence base for improving healthcare access, outcomes and quality of life and mitigating pervasive disparities affecting this population,” said Miriam Ryvicker.

“Fortunately, in recent years, access to gender-affirming surgery has improved considerably in the United States. This study will examine the impact of surgery on the lives of trans and gender nonbinary individuals, and inform the development of post-surgical care and support services,” said Walter Bockting. “Columbia Nursing is proud to partner with the VNSNY on this pioneering effort.”

The goal of this prospective, mixed-method, longitudinal cohort study is to build a rich evidence base on gender identity development and long-term healthcare needs by examining post-surgical changes in quality of life and relationships with healthcare providers among transgender and non-binary individuals who have had a gender-affirming surgery. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, the study will:

- Document changes over time in psychosocial development after surgery, including gender and sexual identity development, intimacy and relationships, social and community support, employment and financial well-being, and environmental mastery and purpose in life

- Examine changes in health-related quality of life including physical health, mental health and social well-being, sexual function, satisfaction and health, health behaviors and self-care, and engagement and retention in healthcare and relationships with healthcare providers
- Identify barriers and facilitators to individuals' engagement with their self-care and engagement and retention in home and subsequent healthcare for both gender-related and other health concerns.

Roughly 300 patients are being recruited for the study from [VNSNY's Gender Affirmation Program \(GAP\)](#), a leading, specialized program designed to provide the best possible outcomes for patients undergoing gender affirmation surgery. Since 2016, the program, which has worked with top hospitals in the New York metropolitan area to develop clinical procedures and protocols specific to gender affirmation post-surgical care, has provided skilled care to more than 800 gender affirmation patients from around the country, helping to ensure that they are supported, engaged and independent.

The VNSNY Gender Affirmation Program is designed to address each patient's unique needs before they leave the hospital and to provide a safe space for them to recuperate fully at home. GAP utilizes a team of more than 200 clinicians who have been specially trained in transgender health.

"The opportunity to learn and better understand the physical and mental needs of our patients as they make this life transition is critically important," said [Shannon Whittington, Director of the VNSNY Gender Affirmation Program](#). "We are grateful—and proud—to be leading a healthcare effort that has the potential to help close disparity gaps for so many in the transgender community."

About VNSNY

One of the largest not-for-profit home- and community-based health care organizations in the nation, the Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) has more than 40,000 patients, health plan members and private pay clients in its care on any given day. VNSNY leverages clinical expertise, data analytics and resources to fulfill its mission of delivering the best possible outcomes for everyone, from newborn infants to those over the age of a hundred. VNSNY is a leading provider of home health care services for transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming adults and holds the [SAGECare Platinum](#) LGBTQ+ cultural competency credential. For more information, please visit www.vnsny.org.