



BRANCH OF INDIAN PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY (KERALA)

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Position statement of Branch of Indian Psychiatric Society (Kerala) regarding 'conversion therapy' and approach towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender persons (LGBTQAI+)

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Sex, gender and related areas are considered taboo and are not openly discussed in our society. Any deviation from the heterosexual orientation was viewed with suspicion and labelled as a mental illness in the past. But with advancement of scientific knowledge, it is known that this is not true. Such deviations are not included among the list of diagnosable mental disorders in any of the major classificatory systems of mental disorders. The Mental Health Care Act 2017 clearly states in chapter II, that mental illness of a person shall not be determined based on non-conformity with moral, social, cultural, work or political values or religious beliefs prevailing in a person's community and chapter V of the act states that treatment should be provided without discrimination on the basis of gender, sex, sexual orientation, religion, culture, caste, social or political beliefs, class, disability or any other basis. So it is clear that these deviations are not conditions to be treated. In spite of this, relatives of persons having a different sexual orientation / identity, sometimes approach mental health professionals including psychiatrists, for treatment. If, upon evaluation, there is a diagnosable mental disorder, they should be offered treatment with dignity like any other patient. If the person has to be treated against his will for a mental disorder, it is mandatory to follow provisions of the Mental Health Care Act 2017 which outlines the sections to be used. They have to be used with the understanding that it may be subject to judicial scrutiny later.

But sometimes the relatives may request the doctor to treat or cure their sexual orientation. In such situations our job is to rule out any underlying mental disorder and inform the relatives that deviation from heterosexual orientation, by itself, is not a mental disorder needing treatment. The relevant provisions of the law also may be informed to them. Under no circumstances shall a psychiatrist offer or promise to treat or cure such a person, unless there is a diagnosable mental illness. We have to remember that it is illegal and unethical to do treatments which do not have scientific evidence. There is no justification for offering conversion therapy in this context. The Hon. Supreme court had struck down the relevant section of IPC (377) under which such sexual behaviours were deemed illegal. The National body of Indian Psychiatric Society also has issued a position statement in this matter and the Branch of Indian Psychiatric Society (Kerala) also has the same view on this subject.

Hence, we request all our colleagues to refrain from doing any actions in violation of our policy and the relevant laws.

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Thrissur
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