

Intersexuality

Intersexuality is found among populations throughout the world. When all causes of intersex are considered (variation in internal sex organs, external genitalia, hormones, and chromosomes) approximately 1.7- 2% of births are intersex (1). Most people do not have their sex scientifically examined and more subtle intersex condition may never be identified.

Up to 2 percent of the population is a significant number of people; however society remains unaware of the existence of intersex people due to medical intervention which asserts surgical 'correction' of ambiguous genitalia of intersex infants. This practice renders intersexuality invisible, removes their right of choice of gender expression, removes functional and pleasurable sex organs, shames intersex individuals into thinking they need to be fixed, and maintains the dimorphic sex categories of male and female.

For some intersex individuals their intersex status those will not be discovered until puberty, when secondary sex characteristic develop or until they are trying to conceive. Late identification of intersexuality can come as a shock to individuals and their partners. It can be especially traumatic if their intersexuality has been kept secret since birth.

Most intersex individuals identify with the existing categories of gender; man or woman. Increasing, however, intersex individuals want their unique sexual and gender identity recognised. Accepting one's self as different and developing positive sex and gender identity can be challenging and is often isolating for individuals and families. I provide counselling and support for individuals, partners and families of intersex persons.

Istar, A. (2004) *Transgender emergence; clinical guidelines for working with gender variant people and their families*. New York: Haworth Clinical Practice Press.



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