

SO/GI: Responding to Challenging Questions

Topic	Challenging Question	Suggested Response	Rationale & Considerations
Can't You Tell?	Can't you tell?	We ask all patients to self-identify because we want our records to capture you as accurately as possible. Would you like to tell me (or mark) your gender identity and/or sexual orientation?	Guessing a patient's SOGI based on appearance or behavior does not allow the patient to identify their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It also increases data errors. Improve the accuracy of SOGI by always asking the patient to self-identify.
Known patient	But you know me – why do you have to ask?	We ask all patients to self-identify because we want our records to capture you as accurately as possible. Also, people's sexual orientation and gender identity can change over time, so we want to make sure we have the most up-to-date information.	Guessing a patient's SOGI based on appearance or behavior does not allow the patient to identify their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It also increases data errors. Improve the accuracy of SOGI by always asking the patient to self-identify.
Why are you asking?	Why are you asking me this? What does this have to do with my health?	People of different sexual orientations and gender identities may have different health care needs. By collecting this information, we can make sure to provide you with the best care. We can also identify patterns and work to reduce health risks by making sure that everyone gets high quality health care.	Patients may not understand why the information is being collected. The suggested response may help them understand how the data will be used to improve quality of care overall.
	Why do you care about my sexual orientation?	By collecting this information, you are helping us to provide better services and programs to our patients. The information can help us identify patterns, and work to reduce risks by making sure that everyone gets high quality health care. Regardless of whether you answer these questions, we will provide you with quality care.	Patients may not understand why the information is being collected. The suggested response may help them understand how the data will be used to improve quality of care overall.
	Why are you asking me this now?	San Francisco recently issued an ordinance requiring us to ask these questions of everyone who accesses services within the city, in order to help improve services for all of our patients and clients.	Patients may be concerned or confused about why this information is being asked now.

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	Why are you asking me this? Do you think I'm gay? Are you gay?	<p>We ask all patients to self-identify because we want our records to capture you as accurately as possible.</p> <p>People of different sexual orientations and gender identities may have different health care needs. By collecting this information, we can make sure to provide you with the best care. We can also identify patterns and work to reduce health risks by making sure that everyone gets high quality health care.</p>	Guessing a patient's SOGI based on appearance or behavior does not allow the patient to identify their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It also increases data errors. Improve the accuracy of SOGI by asking the patient to self-identify.
	I told you the last time. Isn't that in my chart already? Why are you asking me again?	Sometimes these responses change over time. We ask each patient to tell us, rather than assuming that we know based on what was said previously. We want to make sure that what we put in your medical record is based on what you tell us.	Responses may change over time.
	Isn't asking these questions only going to make discrimination worse?	Our clinic/hospital/network is committed to making sure we provide a safe, respectful, and comfortable environment where everyone feels safe. We won't tolerate discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other factor.	This is an opportunity to normalize the practice of asking SOGI questions, as well as reinforcing non-discrimination practices and policies within the network.
Declined	A patient returning for care with a declined code.	Do not ask again.	Patients have a right to decline.
	What if I don't want to answer these questions?	It is perfectly alright if you do not want to answer some or all of the questions. However, this information does help our hospital provide better care to our patients. Regardless of whether you answer these questions, we will provide you with quality care.	The patient might not want to respond now, but might do so later in the appointment or during a subsequent visit. Until they are comfortable, stay calm and code them as "declined."
Privacy	What will my information be used for?	By providing us with information on your sexual orientation and gender identity, you are helping us to provide better services and programs to our patients. For example, with this information, we can offer effective programs that can improve health.	Patients may have fears about their information being used to target them in some way. The suggested response may help ease their mind.

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	Who will see my information?	The only people who will see your information are members of your care team and others who are authorized to see your medical record. <i>[Depending on the person's age, this may include family members and/or guardians].</i>	Patients may have fears about their information being used to target them in some way. The suggested response may help ease their mind.
	Why am I being asked these questions?	We are collecting information on sexual orientation and gender identity from all of our patients. We ask all of our patients, but it is perfectly alright if you do not want to answer some or all of the questions. By knowing more about your background, we will be better able to meet your health needs.	Patients may have fears about their information being used to target them. The suggested response may help ease their mind.
	How secure is this information?	Your information is private and secure. The only people who will see your information are members of your care team and others who are authorized to see your medical record.	Patients may have fears about their information being used to target them in some way. The suggested response may help ease their mind.
	I am offended by these questions. This is none of your business.	I understand, and it is not my intention to offend you at all. We ask all of our patients, but it is perfectly alright if you do not want to answer some or all of the questions. Regardless of whether you answer these questions, we will provide you with quality care. This information does help our hospital/clinic provide better care to our patients. Anything you do share with us is private and confidential.	Patients may find these questions intrusive or too personal. Patients may have fears about their information being used to target them in some way. The suggested response may help ease their mind.
Don't understand the questions	I don't understand. What is the difference between gender identity and sex on my birth certificate?	We ask both because gender identity may be different than what is on your birth certificate. Gender identity is how you understand yourself and what you call yourself – it can be male, female, or something else. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex at birth.	Patients may need more information about terminology in order to understand what is being asked.
	I don't understand. What do you mean by pronoun?	Pronouns are about how you want people to refer to you. For example, I go by pronouns like she/her. Some people use they/them, he/his, or something else. Do you have any specific pronouns you use?	Patients may need more information about terminology in order to understand what is being asked.
	I was born a girl. Of course I'm a woman.	Thanks for providing that information. For some people, their gender identity is the same as their sex at birth, and for some people it is different. We ask everyone, rather than making assumptions.	This is an opportunity to educate patients and normalize the practice of asking rather than assuming.