Ethics on Demand – Transphobia

**Article:** [**When it comes to health care, transphobia persists**](https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-when-it-comes-to-health-care-transphobia-persists/)

**What was the situation?**

“I’ve spent the night vomiting and in extreme pain. I have Crohn’s disease, but I don’t know if it is causing my symptoms. Debilitated from dehydration and a low-grade fever, I’m lying on an ambulance stretcher in the ER department of a major downtown hospital in Toronto. I’m barely able to communicate or think coherently. The paramedics are talking with the intake nurse on my behalf.”

In the abovementioned article, the patient overhears health professionals discussing her gender, including whether or not the patient is male or female as well as her prior gender-confirmation surgery. The nurse publically mocks the patient and comments on the patient’s genitalia.

**What went wrong?**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Discrimination | Lack of respect | Lack of knowledge | Lack of judgement |

**Using the Code of Ethics**

The [CSMLS Code of Ethics](https://www.csmls.org/About-Us/Our-Members/Code-of-Ethics.aspx) serves to define and expand the inherent ethical concepts contained in the [CSMLS Code of Professional Conduct](https://www.csmls.org/About-Us/Our-Members/Code-of-Conduct.aspx), document expectations of ethical behaviour for all medical laboratory professionals and provide a framework during professional and personal self-evaluation. Consider how adhering to these codes could have prevented the situation. What other codes are applicable?

*Code of Ethics*

* 5.1 Provide service with dignity and respect to all, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, age, health status, or mental or physical disability.
* 5.3 Encourage the trust and confidence of the public through high standards of professional competence, conduct and deportment.
* 3.1 Reflect on one’s fitness to practise and expand one's knowledge, skills, judgments and attitudes through continued professional development.
* 3.2 Contribute to the development of the profession by sharing one's knowledge and experience.

**Relevant Articles**

['What do Scottish people look like?' GP receptionist is left shocked as a patient says they 'did not want to see an Asian doctor'](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6601963/GP-praises-receptionist-schooled-patient-said-did-not-want-Asian-doctor.html)

[Equity-focused health care improves patient outcomes, study finds](https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/equity-focused-health-care-improves-patient-outcomes-study-finds)

[Obesity is one of the last acceptable forms of discrimination – but should it be a protected characteristic in the workplace?](https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/obesity-awareness-week-workplace-discrimination-fat-overweight-health-ecj-a8726651.html)