

# I THINK, I WANT, I FEEL

The Year in Review: Mental Health Children and Adolescents

Anna van der Miesen, M.D., Ph.D.

## WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

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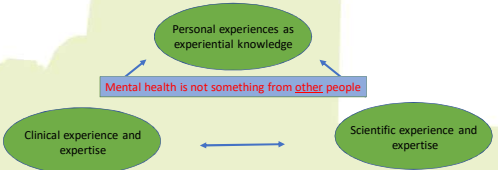
## Presenter (financial) disclosures and positionality and reflexivity statements

- Current research funding:
  - *womenmind*
  - KNAW Ter Meulen beurs
  - Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
  - Agis Innovatiefonds (advisory board)
  - Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences Dragons' Den (advisory board)

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## Presenter disclosures and positionality and reflexivity statements


- I have several identities that have informed my thinking about the mental health of transgender/gender diverse children and adolescents.



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## I THINK, I WANT, I FEEL: ME AND THE OTHER PEOPLE?

- Increased polarization.
- How is the evidence being interpreted? How to weigh the evidence?



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## Scientific approach (1)

- PubMed and PsycINFO search with a combination of MeSH Terms and free text for transgender/gender diverse and mental health.
- Articles published between 08/01/2021 and 03/31/2023.
- Inclusion criteria:
  - The study included participants aged 18 years or younger;
  - One or more study variables were related to mental health;
  - Articles were available in the English language.
- A total of **242** unique abstracts were found and screened.
- After initial screening by 2 independent researchers **94** articles (Cohen's kappa coefficient,  $\kappa = .89$ ) were fully reviewed.

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## Scientific approach (2)

- Thematic analyses of included articles identified **7** main themes:
  - Theme 1: General mental health profiles of transgender/gender diverse children and adolescents.
  - Theme 2: Non-suicidal self-injury, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts.
  - Theme 3: Resilience factors.
  - Theme 4: Mental health outcomes and gender-affirmative care.
  - Theme 5: Other interventions to improve mental health.
  - Theme 6: COVID-19 and mental health.
  - Theme 7: ~~the~~ Ongoing questions and controversies (let's talk!)

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## Theme 1: General mental health profiles

- All included studies ( $n = 54$ ) found increased mental health problems compared with different comparison groups (e.g., Childs et al., 2023).
- Increased mental healthcare utilization was found (Hisle-Gorman et al., 2021).
- Autism/neurodivergence!
- A meta-analysis revealed that the pooled estimate of the prevalence of autism was 11% (Kallitsounaki & Williams, 2022).



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## Theme 2: Non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI), suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts

- 1 meta-analysis, 2 literature reviews, used as outcome measure in 23 studies.
- Overall a mean prevalence of NSSI of 28.2% (9 studies, 3057 participants, 95% CI 14.8–47.1) was found.
- A similar prevalence (28%) was found for suicidal ideation (6 studies, 2249 participants, 95% CI 15–46.3).
- The prevalence of suicide attempts was 14.8% (5 studies, 1039 participants, 95% CI 7.8–26.3) (Surace et al., 2021).
- Mechanisms? (Witlin et al., 2023)



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## Theme 3: Resilience factors

- 8 studies explicitly studied resilience factors, for example:
  - (Romantic) relationship quality improves mental health (Sarno et al., 2021).
  - Social media may support the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ+ youths through peer connection, identity management, and social support (Berger et al., 2022).
  - Mentalization was found as a resilience factor (Caldarera et al., 2022).
  - Group or community coping (Craig et al., 2021).
  - Families (Meanley et al., 2021).

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## Theme 4: Mental health outcomes and gender-affirmative care

- $N = 38$  young people; GD improved after 1 year of gender-affirming treatment (Lavender et al., 2023).
- $N = 104$  young people; lower odds of depression and suicidality over 1 year (Tordoff et al., 2022).



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## Theme 4: Mental health outcomes and gender-affirmative care

- Testosterone treatment is associated with lower levels of internalizing symptoms among trans adolescent boys ( $N = 19$ ) (Grannis et al., 2021).



Grannis et al. (2021) found that testosterone treatment was associated with lower levels of internalizing symptoms and body image dissatisfaction in transgender boys.

- Physical appearance and global self-worth improved significantly over the course of gender-affirming treatment, including surgeries ( $N = 70$ ) (Arnoldussen et al., 2022).



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## Theme 4: Mental health outcomes and gender-affirmative care

- In the longitudinal course of gender affirming hormone treatment over 2 year ( $N = 315$ ) appearance congruence and psychosocial functioning improved (Chen et al., 2023).



### Growing Evidence and Remaining Questions in Adolescent Transgender Care

Arnoldussen et al., 2022

This work in the Journal, a much-needed primary report from Chen et al. on 2 years of gender-affirming hormone (GAH) in transgender adolescents appears. The approach to adolescent transgender care with early treatment with

Dutch model) and became the dominant model of care for transgender adolescents. Especially over the past decade, mental health outcomes have led to comprehensive and subtle

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