

Women's Leadership Spotlight Series

INTRO: Joan Grzybowski

Joan Grzybowski, DO, FCOFP is an osteopathic family physician practicing in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area. She has been an ACOFP member since 1984 and became an ACOFP Fellow in 2004. Dr. Grzybowski has served as the Chair of the Minority/LGBTQ Health and Wellness Committee since 2013.



Dr. Grzybowski is passionate about supporting minority and LGBTQ populations within the medical community. She is committed to providing information and resources with ACOFP members as well as other medical professionals to ensure that patients in these communities receive quality medical care. As part of ACOFP's Women's Leadership Spotlight series, Dr. Grzybowski shares a short history of Pride Month, with parades and activities celebrating inclusion and acceptance of the LGBTQ community happening throughout the country in June.

Why Pride, Why Now

The decade of the 1960s was a time of change. We were fighting a war that had our nation divided. The lack of equal rights of many of our citizens was showcased through speakers like Martin Luther King, Jr., Robert Kennedy and Harvey Milk, and through protests sometimes peaceful and sometimes fraught with violence. Our young people gathered in droves to a rock festival called Woodstock, which featured our most memorable bands and singers of that era.

In 1969, in Greenwich Village, New York, an iconic bar called Stonewall existed. It was one of those rare places in New York that allowed the LGBTQ population to gather, celebrate and express themselves without fear of reparation or discrimination. It was a safe haven, until one night the police came in a raid and arrested and jailed many of the patrons of that bar.

The incident that night sparked a movement. The LGBTQ community had been a relatively quiet group to that point in time, trying to survive in a world that allowed them to be fired for choosing to love a person outside of what was considered the norm at that time. Family abandonment in that era was a high risk if you came out so few people were open and out. Marriage was not an option for gay couples nor was shared health plans. In fact, being gay was given an ICD code for insurance purposes. Electro- shock therapy was an accepted treatment option.

All of this led to a movement of change across the US. It was from the raid at Stonewall that a momentum began leading us to Pride Month, which is celebrated across the US in June of each year. During this month cities place rainbow flags throughout communities. Events and parades are held celebrating the LGBTQ community and the progressive changes that have occurred through the subsequent decades.

We at the ACOFP Minority/LGBTQI Health and Wellness Committee want to take this moment to reflect on the advances made and to point out that many health disparities still exist because of prejudice against populations because of their particular race or color, sexual orientation,

geographic location or economics. Many other factors add to disparities of care, but that article is for another time.

Today, programs exist to educate our faculty about diversity. A nationally-known program called the [Safe Zone Project](#) is available in many of our medical schools. Some physicians include signs of welcome in their offices and waiting rooms so that the LGBTQ population feels more at ease as they initiate and continue care with their physicians. More can be done to ensure that patients in the LGBTQI community receives the best possible care.

It is worth noting that each generation moves the meter a little further to a world of inclusivity.

Happy Pride Month to all!

Joan Grzybowski, DO, FACOFP
Chair of Minority/LGBTQ Health and Wellness Committee