

POSITION STATEMENT ON DISCRIMINATION

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX (LGBTI) COMMUNITY

It was with concern that the SASOP Board took note of the homophobic legislation recently passed in Uganda. Uganda is the latest African country to actively discriminate against the gay and lesbian community and thus became one of 38 African and around 78 countries worldwide criminalizing homosexuality. The Board is also aware of recent homophobic comments from and legislation enacted in Russia as well as the recently vetoed anti-homosexual legislation proposed in the Arizona state of the United States of America.

SASOP is committed to human rights including the right to dignity, privacy and equality and strongly opposes to any measures which unduly and unfairly restrict these fundamental human rights, in this case discrimination against members of the LGBTI community.

In 2005 SASOP published a position statement on homosexuality following the Constitutional Court's ruling on same-sex unions. It was noted that homosexual individuals have a need for, and form lasting relationships, and, like their heterosexual counterparts are equally capable of being good parents.

The Board acknowledges and highly regards the South African constitution as the supreme law of the Republic. The South African constitution safeguards the inherent dignity and privacy of all citizens. The SASOP Board views discrimination against members of the LGBTI community as an infringement of the democratic principles of equality and individual liberty enshrined in the constitution. The SASOP Board view sexual and reproductive rights as fundamental human rights as protected by Section 9 of the constitution.

At the same time the Board recognizes that South Africa remains a pluralistic society with competing values, including various religious beliefs and practices as well as cultural values. The Board respects differences of opinion and encourages an open and honest debate as part of a national democratic

dialogue but stands firm on the principle of "first do no harm". To this end, we also distance ourselves from so-called "reversal therapy" as it is traumatizing to individuals concerned, is not proven to be effective and further entrenches discrimination.

As psychiatrists, and given the history of South Africa, we are well acquainted with the emotional sequelae and the potential harm of discrimination and prejudice. In clinical practice psychiatrists deal with patients, including members of the LGBTI community, living with the consequences of such discrimination and stigmatization. As the SASOP Board we firmly oppose such discrimination and stigmatization.

Issued by Dr Gerhard P Grobler
on behalf of the SASOP Board