

The Endocrine Society's Dangerous Transgender Politicization

Members we spoke with take exception to the group's guidelines on 'gender-affirming care.'

By
Roy Eappen
and
Ian Kingsbury

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protester wears a transgender flag at the Missouri Statehouse in Jefferson City, Mo., March 20. PHOTO: CHARLIE RIEDEL/ASSOCIATED PRESS

A federal court last week struck down an Arkansas law banning the provision of sex-change procedures—off-label “puberty blockers,” opposite-sex hormones and surgery—to minors. In the June 20 ruling, Judge James M. Moody Jr. repeatedly cited the Endocrine Society, the professional organization of physicians who specialize in hormones. He wrote that the society has “published widely-accepted clinical practice guidelines for the treatment of gender dysphoria” that “were developed by experts in the field” and “are recognized as best practices.”

In truth, over the past decade transgender activists have co-opted the Endocrine Society and other professional organizations to promote such treatments for adolescents and even young children. Their

guidelines are based on flimsy evidence, giving the appearance that invasive and irreversible treatments are beneficial for young patients despite a growing body of evidence to the contrary. The guidelines have been used by lawmakers in states such as California and New York to endanger children—and now by judges to block state efforts at protecting youngsters.

A few days before Judge Moody's ruling, we attended the annual meeting of the Endocrine Society, of which one of us (Dr. Eappen) is a member. We found that endocrinologists are aware of the society's failings and rue its elevation of transgender activism over medical expertise and patient needs.

The Endocrine Society endorsed medical "transition" for young people in 2017. It published the "clinical practice guidelines" for the "treatment of gender-dysphoric/gender-incongruent persons" that Judge Moody cited. At the time, there was little good research on this issue, and the Endocrine Society admitted the guidelines were largely based on evidence of "low" or "very low" quality. The society nonetheless recommended that some children receive a "hormone regimen that will suppress the body's sex hormone secretion, determined at birth and manifested at puberty."

At this year's meeting, we had frank and fruitful discussions with endocrinologists who provide hormonal treatments to kids with gender dysphoria, as well as some who don't. Without exception, they acknowledged that the society's evidence base for pediatric gender transition is weak, at best. Yet while they're aware of the guidelines' shortcomings, they're afraid to voice their concerns. The society's full-throated endorsement of gender-affirming care implied condemnation of anyone who holds differing views. Medical professionals are being cowed into silence and coerced into providing treatments they know are dangerous to children.

Perhaps the most telling interactions were with European endocrinologists, who were there to discuss the latest research and treatments in the specialty. Those we spoke with expressed surprise that the U.S. hasn't banned, or at least severely restricted, such treatments for adolescents and children.

England, Sweden and Finland have all taken this path, and Norway is likely to follow. Belgium, France, Ireland and Italy are also raising concerns. These countries are following the science, which shows that the claimed benefits of hormonal intervention for young people fail to outweigh the risks.

Most disturbing, endocrinologists on all sides of this debate told us that practitioners aren't complying with the precautions set forth in the society's guidelines. Despite the document's call for careful mental-health screening and its acknowledgment that most cases of childhood gender dysphoria naturally resolve during puberty, endocrinologists recognize that some of their peers are rushing young patients to irreversible hormonal treatments. Every endocrinologist we spoke with supports doing more to ensure that these guardrails are enforced, and many favor erecting new ones.

Judge Moody's ruling cites the Endocrine Society's guidelines in a lengthy section titled "Findings of Fact," which is essentially a recitation of transgender ideology. A trial judge's findings of fact are all but unreviewable on appeal. By allowing ideologues to hijack their organization, endocrinologists are making themselves complicit in a scientifically baseless movement that inflicts serious harm on children's physical and mental health.

Dr. Eappen is a practicing endocrinologist in Montreal and a senior fellow at Do No Harm. Mr. Kingsbury is Do No Harm's research director.

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As protests erupted outside a Glendale, Calif., school board meeting discussing LGBTQ+ issues in the classroom on June 6, 2023, opponents highlighted their concerns about teachers discussing sexual orientation and gender identity with children. Images: The Orange County Register via AP/Zuma Press Composite: Mark Kelly

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