

# NO LIMITS



## Healthcare Without Labels

Our first **NO LIMITS** feature spotlights an FIU Occupational Therapy (OT) faculty and her students advocating for the transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) community, especially teens and young adults.

Associate OT Professor Amy Paul-Ward (*pictured above*), PhD, and students Martha Gomez, Gisela Jorge, Jose Raez and Adalys Suarez, were discouraged by the limited scope of research and practice by occupational therapists to address this small, but growing, subset of the LGBTQ+ population.

According to Dr. Paul-Ward (*pictured above*), the internal struggle of TGNC individuals can be exacerbated externally by a lack of culturally responsive healthcare to aid them in the physical, emotional, and societal adjustments needed to finally live as their authentic selves. Recognizing the unique cultural identity of each individual client is part of the American Occupational Therapy Association's definition of cultural responsiveness. In this context, the FIU OT students felt that the highly marginalized TGNC community was underrepresented in treatment protocols.

With guidance from Dr. Paul-Ward, the students launched a pilot study evaluating the current role of OTs to help TGNC clients with the clinical preparations for transition and subsequent adaptation to daily life in society. The goal is to identify gaps in TGNC cultural responsiveness training and develop curricula specific to the occupational needs of TGNC individuals to better prepare OTs in this emerging area of practice.

Although the study is in its infancy, the students have presented posters on their work to-date, and plan to release an abstract and white paper later this year. They also are collaborating with Dr. Paul-Ward to create a permanent research program to keep the study going long after they graduate.

Their ultimate hope through the study is to bypass the limits of established healthcare delivery through transformative OT approaches that help TGNC individuals make life-affirming transitions and affords them the same access to quality healthcare that everyone deserves, regardless of labels. [View the pilot study research poster here.](#)

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Together we can inform and encourage one another to push the limits of our discipline and help new avenues of practice and progress emerge.