

Providing safe, respectful transgender health care

One Kaiser Permanente patient shares the importance of being able to live her truth.

In early 2020, at age 52, Michelle Herman left her marriage, family home and employment to transition and live her truth. “If I hadn’t decided that Saturday evening in September 2019, that I was going to face all of the societal and familial consequences of transition—and if I hadn’t started HRT on January 5 of last year—my children would have a dead father,” says Michelle. “I can speak with 100% clarity that my medical transition saved my life.”



Photo courtesy of Michelle Herman

Michelle’s new job offered Kaiser Permanente health coverage, which she chose in part due to the organization’s reputation for providing quality transgender health care. “Everything transferred from my former health care provider to Kaiser Permanente pretty seamlessly, and the doctors have been amazing. As difficult as that time was, they made it so much easier,” she says of switching her care and coverage at such a pivotal moment in her life. “I like the extent of the trans-care coverage. There is care that I’m getting as a covered benefit that I wouldn’t have been able to afford otherwise. Even with changes to my insurance coverage – from employer-based to Covered California – I’ve had only minimal disruptions.”

Kaiser Permanente offers a wide range of personalized and comprehensive health care services to our transgender and nonbinary members, including gender-affirming surgery, hormone therapy, facial hair removal, gynecological services, fertility preservation, mental health care, primary care, and care management.

“As a primary care provider, I work with specialists across the organization to make sure my patients can access all the care that they need, including transition-relation care. This is just one of the many important services that we provide to our patients – it’s not a ‘carve out’ or an ‘extra,’” said Dr. Jenny Phung-Payne, Michelle’s primary care physician. “Kaiser Permanente has always been very vocal and clear about our commitment to providing quality care to the LGBTQ community. I’m so happy to hear and see that Michelle is doing so well now. It makes me proud to be part of this organization.”

Kaiser Permanente is committed to promoting equity and inclusion, as both a care provider and an employer. A pleasant surprise along Michelle’s care journey was when she encountered a transgender nurse who had undergone the same surgery, with the same surgeon. “It was so helpful to get to hear from someone who’s had the same experience,” says Michelle. “Even more so, to know that Kaiser Permanente employs trans people and that they use the same doctors you are using says a lot.”

As she moves forward with her care at Kaiser Permanente, Michelle is clear about the importance of the movement to promote LGBTQ inclusion, awareness, and acceptance within health care environments: “It’s a huge thing to be able to walk into a place and know that I’ll be safe, honored and respected.”

To learn more about transgender health care at Kaiser Permanente, click [here](#).