



Media Contact: Serena Smith  
Wexner Medical Center Media Relations  
614-293-3737  
[Serena.Smith@osumc.edu](mailto:Serena.Smith@osumc.edu)

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**\*\* Video and photos available for download: <https://bit.ly/3aqSaxl>**

## **OHIO STATE VOICE THERAPY, SURGERY HELPS TRANSGENDER PATIENTS FIND THEIR BEST VOICE**

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Transgender individuals are often the subject of discrimination, harassment and violence, which can lead to struggles with mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Comprehensive gender-affirming voice care services available at [The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center](#) can help transgender patients communicate in a manner that matches their gender identity, improving their personal safety and overall well-being.

“Anytime someone gets misgendered, that’s a huge blow to your confidence, to your emotional health, self-esteem, and it really plays in pretty tightly with identity,” said [Dr. Laura Matrka](#), otolaryngologist at Ohio State Wexner Medical Center and clinical associate professor of otolaryngology at [The Ohio State University College of Medicine](#). “We’ve found that when someone is able to transition, a lot of the underlying mental health issues that people assumed were ingrained get better.”

Patients seeking a voice that aligns with their gender identity start with an assessment of their overall voice by an otolaryngologist. During the laryngoscopy procedure, the surgeon examines the vocal cords and evaluates how they vibrate. Following the assessment, patients participate in 10 – 12 weeks of intense therapy with a voice therapist who specializes in gender-affirming voice therapy.

“There is a lot more to voice presentation than pitch, and a lot of the things people do with their voice are learned over their lifetime,” said Anna Lichtenstein, a voice therapist at Ohio State Wexner Medical Center. “In voice therapy, I work with transgender patients to achieve these nuanced characteristics by working on things like resonance, inflection, airflow, breathing and intonation.”

A small subset of patients may need further treatment to modify the voice. In those cases, a surgeon can perform a voice or pitch elevation surgery such as Wendler’s glottoplasty.

“In some cases, surgery helps with the strain and the fatigue it takes to maintain a pitch and, maybe most importantly, it eliminates accidental bass notes,” Matrka said.

While there are online resources that offer advice and exercises to alter the voice, patients who use these tools may put too much strain on the vocal cords if done incorrectly or too quickly.

“I’m able to give them prompting and feedback to make sure how we’re manipulating the voice is really healthy and it’s something that they can maintain over their lifetime,” Lichtenstein said.

Voice therapy and surgery are part of a [broad range of surgical, non-surgical and mental health care services](#) at Ohio State Wexner Medical Center that are available to transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming patients.

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