

JEANNE HOFF

b. October 16, 1938

d. October 26, 2023

TRANSGENDER TRAILBLAZER

If you are meddling in the life and freedom of someone else, you ought to ... make sure that you're entitled to do so and that they'll be better off for your having been there."

Her courageous work laid the foundation for today's gender-affirming health care.

Jeanne Hoff was the first known openly transgender psychiatrist to treat trans patients. At a time of societal and medical ignorance regarding gender identity, her courageous, revolutionary work laid the foundation for today's trans health care.

Hoff was assigned male at birth in St. Louis, Missouri. Her father, a laborer, reportedly suffered from alcoholism. Hoff spent time in the Coast Guard before she was offered a partial scholarship from Washington University in St. Louis, where she earned her bachelor's degree in 1960. She received a master's degree from Yale University,

followed by a medical degree from Columbia University in 1963. Hoff began teaching pathology at Washington University School of Medicine in 1971. She completed her residency in psychiatry there a few years later.

As a psychiatrist, Hoff collaborated with Dr. Harry Benjamin, an endocrinologist and sexologist considered the father of transgender care in the U.S. Among others, Benjamin treated Christine Jorgensen, one of the first nationally publicized people to undergo gender transition.

In the throes of transitioning herself, Hoff took over Benjamin's New York City practice in 1976, just before starting her own. Working from her home in SoHo, NY, Hoff treated primarily gay and transgender patients, treating the whole person, both psychologically and physically. Around this same time, she publicly debated Dr.

Charles Socarides, an infamously anti-gay psychiatrist intent on reversing his profession's decision to stop pathologizing homosexuality.

Hoff underwent gender affirmation surgery in 1977. Putting herself on the line, she permitted a crew to film the procedure. She hoped it would both empower her patients to live openly and enlighten the medical community. The footage became part of the award-winning 1978 television documentary "Becoming Jeanne: A Search for Sexual Identity," cohosted by the actor Lynn Redgrave. In it, Hoff described her own struggle to find the informed health care she needed.

In 1979 Hoff became an inaugural member of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, which developed the first evidence-based standards of gender-queer care. It adopted what was then the widely discounted position that biological sex and gender identity exist independently.

Hoff gave up her private practice in 1983. She relocated to California, where she treated former convicts in Oakland and then death-row prisoners at San Quentin. She retired in 1999, after an inmate assaulted her.

Hoff donated her archives to the Kinsey Institute, dedicated to the study of human sexuality and gender. Aged 85, Hoff died in San Francisco from Parkinson's disease. The New York Times published her obituary.



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