

Below are excerpts from a recent Medscape article from earlier this year regarding regret and other ill effects of transition therapies. Detransitioners are individuals who have undergone sex reassignment surgery/hormone therapy, and later on change their mind and wish to return to their original genetic sex.



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In the past year, MacKinnon and his team of researchers have talked to 40 detransitioners in the United States, Canada and Europe, **many of them having first received gender-affirming medical treatment in their 20s or younger.** Their stories have upended his assumptions.

Many have said their gender identity remained fluid well after the start of treatment, and **a third of them expressed regret about their decision to transition from the gender they were assigned at birth.** Some said they avoided telling their doctors about detransitioning out of embarrassment or shame. Others said their doctors were ill-equipped to help them with the process. Most often, they talked about how **transitioning did not address their mental health problems.**

For this article, Reuters spoke to **17 people who began medical transition as minors and said they now regretted some or all of their transition.** Many said they realized only after transitioning that they were homosexual, or they always knew they were lesbian or gay but felt, as adolescents, that it was safer or more desirable to transition to a gender that made them heterosexual. Others said sexual abuse or assault made them want to leave the gender associated with that trauma. **Many also said they had autism or mental health issues** such as bipolar disorder **that complicated their search for identity as teenagers.**

Echoing what MacKinnon has found in his work, **nearly all of these young people told Reuters that they wished their doctors or therapists had more fully discussed these complicating factors before allowing them to medically transition.**

"There's a real need for more long-term studies that track patients for five years or longer," MacKinnon said. **"Many detransitioners talk about feeling good during the first few years of their transition. After that, they may experience regret."**

Doctors and detransitioners also described the challenging physical and emotional consequences of the process. **For example, patients who had their ovaries or testes removed no longer produce the hormones that match their gender assigned at birth, risking bone-density loss and other effects unless they take those hormones the rest of their lives.** Some may undergo years of painful and expensive procedures to undo changes to their bodies caused by the hormones they took to transition. Those who had mastectomies may later undergo breast reconstruction surgery. As parents, they may regret losing the ability to lactate.

Detransitioners also may need counseling to cope with the process and any lingering regret.

Still skeptical that regret was a significant issue, MacKinnon in the autumn of 2021 embarked on his latest study and began talking to more people about their decisions to detransition. In July, he published a paper based on formal interviews with 28 of the **more than 200 detransitioners he and his colleagues have found.** **A third expressed either strong or partial regret about their transition.** Some said their transitions should have proceeded more slowly, with more therapy. **Others expressed regret about the lasting impact on their bodies.** Some said their **mental health needs weren't adequately addressed before transitioning.** **"They felt like their consent wasn't informed because they didn't initially understand what was going on that might have explained their feelings and suffering,"** MacKinnon told Reuters.