

## **James Muller, DO**

### **RESIDENCY**

Novant Health Family Medicine Residency Program, Cornelius, NC

### **MEDICAL SCHOOL**

Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine, Lillington, NC

Dr. Muller counts starting hormone replacement therapy for one of his patients and writing his first letter of recommendation for a patient to be considered for the surgery as one of his top professional accomplishments. Professionally, his interests include gender-affirming care, sexual health, and HIV management in the family medicine setting. Following residency, Muller would like to remain in Charlotte, NC, and pursue outpatient family medicine with a focus on LGBTQIA+ medicine, gender-affirming care, HIV care, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), chronic disease management, and osteopathic manipulative therapy. In his free time, he enjoys trying new restaurants, traveling, swimming, indoor cycling, volunteering, shopping, spending time with family and friends, going to the beach, and taking long walks with his dog, Mandy.

### **Awards and Recognition**

2017-2018	Nominee for 2017 and 2018 DO Student of the Year
2017	American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Translating Osteopathic Understanding into Community Health Program Gold Service Award for 100+ hours of community service

### **Offices and Appointments**

2022-Present	Resident co-director
2022-Present	Resident director, Osteopathic Education
2022-Present	Member, Obesity Medicine Association
2017	Co-director, Campbell University Community Care Clinic
2017	Director, Community Outreach for Campbell University

### **Community and Public Services**

2022-Present	Volunteer, Time Out Youth
2021	CMS Child Health Assessments, Novant Health Community Engagement
2018	Volunteer, Rowan Helping Ministries
2018	Organizer and Contestant, Mr. Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine Male Beauty Pageant
2017	Mission Trip to Ecuador

### **Personal Statement from Dr. James Muller**

Before I left for lunch, my last patient of the morning passed me in the hallway, beaming. I smiled and thought about how amazing my career in family medicine would be if every day were like this one. A few weeks ago, I received a phone call from another doctor asking if I knew of any providers offering gender-affirming care. They

had a patient interested in hormone replacement. I excitedly said I would love to meet this patient as I am passionate about this type of medicine. At the first appointment, I met my new patient and his mother. I learned how he started to research transitioning in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and now, at age 18, the opportunity presented itself to continue his journey. I was ecstatic that I could offer life-changing care in the family medicine setting to someone who had wanted this type of treatment for more than ten years! He told me about many years of anxiety and depression that stemmed from his gender identity not matching his external appearance. He also shared that meeting and knowing someone who was ready to provide the desired care had already improved his outlook on life and mood concerns. I feel honored every day that I can work with these deserving patients in becoming who they always felt they truly were.

One of my first goals during residency was to increase the amount of LGBTQIA+ medicine we provide in our clinic and further foster an environment of inclusion and safety for all. During the process of interviewing for residency, I asked every program director if I would be able to pursue my passions in LGBTQIA+ medicine and gender-affirming care. I knew I found my future home with the Novant Health Family Medicine Residency Program when my program director already had a plan in mind for how I could become a skilled provider in transgender care. Dr. Mark Higdon not only welcomed my interests but also established me with my mentor in LGBTQIA+ medicine and enabled rotating with this mentor very early. Dr. Higdon wanted me to become well-established in gender-affirming care so our clinic could prepare to take on a larger transgender population. It has been a beautiful process seeing the effort our clinic staff puts into creating safe spaces for these patients and the respect that is exemplified consistently by using preferred names and pronouns. Instead of having concerns about offering a new type of medicine, my program has encouraged me to grow our transgender community, foster new relationships, and start hormone therapy in the family medicine setting.

From the beginning of my residency, I have created a base of knowledge for other residents to pursue transgender care. Through didactic sessions and open conversations, I wanted to set up a foundation for interested future residents to be educated in LGBTQIA+ specific health topics and gender-affirming care. This was also an opportunity to ensure staff from the front desk to providers were well versed in preferred names and pronouns. My goal at the end of residency is to have our clinic's name out in the community as a safe space for transgender patients to come to pursue all aspects of their care. A larger goal is to advocate to the community that a family medicine setting is an opportune place to provide gender-affirming care and to be seen for all facets of their health. Outside of residency, I am working to create an education curriculum that offers information to transgender youth in the Charlotte area about hormone replacement, medication safety, and resources for underserved patients.

### **Overcoming Obstacles**

Family medicine has allowed me to pursue my passions in sexual health. So many times, important questions are not asked due to the awkwardness of this type of conversation. Patients like me may not feel entirely comfortable sharing such personal

information about themselves. How can we be expected to properly serve our patients without establishing a safe space for these discussions? Many patients want to ask intimate questions about their sexual well-being but may not have found a provider with whom they feel comfortable discussing these matters. I want to take the time to be an advocate for safer, more enjoyable sexual practices. I hope to be a beacon of education on a topic that is not typically taught well. I want to feel confident asking questions about whom my patients are dating, whether they are using dating apps, how they are coming to terms with their sexuality, and whether they are practicing safe, enjoyable sex. I have become an advocate for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), a medicine that will hopefully eradicate the transmission of HIV. How would I be able to offer this life-changing medication without asking vital questions about sex and sexuality? I also work with providers in women's sexual health, sexual dysfunction, and menopause. My residency program has allowed me to provide multiple didactic sessions discussing ways to take a thorough sexual history and methods to normalize these conversations. Family medicine gives me a setting to focus on these issues. It allows the time to establish open, ongoing discussions about concerns that patients may not feel comfortable sharing with anyone else.

### **My Unique Journey**

I am a worthy recipient of the AAFP Award for Excellence in Graduate Medical Education because I have utilized my passion for serving marginalized communities to expand upon the type of treatment we can offer in our residency clinic. I am incredibly fortunate to have had my coming-out experience. I believe I offer the same empathy and compassion to those ready to share a revelation that may have been hidden or pushed aside for many years. I have also worked to create avenues for underserved and uninsured patients to obtain hormone therapy in a free clinic setting. Finally, I believe I exemplify a genuine love and desire for education in topics such as sexual health, LGBTQIA+ medicine, and gender-affirming care. I hope other physicians will also want to pursue this type of medicine in their practices. I am grateful daily to be a family medicine physician and feel honored to offer care that truly changes lives.

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