

Head of national trans program spoke out against organizer designated as LGBTQ hate group: – Unproblematic, says OUS

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Silje J. Eggestad

January 16, 2025



At the beginning of October last year, consultant **Anne Wæhre** at Oslo University Hospital participated in the conference *Questioning Gender – Psychotherapeutic Approaches to Youth Gender Dysphoria* at the hospital's expense.

Wæhre, who is the general manager **of the National Treatment Service for Gender Incongruence in Children and Adolescents** at the National Hospital, participated in a panel debate during the conference, which lasted three days in Athens.

Behind the conference was the think tank Society for Evidence-Based Gender Medicine (SEGM), which in a major survey has been linked to arch-conservative organizations in the United States that work purposefully to restrict the rights and health services of transgender people.

The survey was conducted by the extremism watchdog Southern Poverty Law Center, which believes SEGM is a hub in a large network of actors who spread pseudoscience about gender dysphoria and trans health.

An entire industry uncovered by the Huffington Post is dedicated to paying several of the actors in this network to appear as expert witnesses in courtrooms and state assemblies in red states in the United States, where several of the experts appear to have a view of transgenderism informed by a Christian conservative faith.

Among the network's actors are Project 2025 architect Heritage Foundation, the legal advocacy group that struck down Roe v. Wade, actors funded by the super-rich Koch family, and a SEGM advisor who has an ongoing X-bromance with Elon Musk.

Professionals at Yale School of Medicine have reprimanded SEGM for spreading misleading and unscientific content, and Boston-based endocrinologist **Ole-Petter Hamnvik** writes to Filter Nyheter that he believes SEGM cannot be considered a scientific actor.

However, Oslo University Hospital (OUS) describes Senior Consultant Wæhre's participation at the SEGM conference last fall as "unproblematic".

Wæhre herself tells Filter Nyheter that she is familiar with the criticism of SEGM, but believes that the organization's contribution is not professionally inferior to what is promoted by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), which has published clinical treatment protocols for gender dysphoria since 1979:

– In my opinion, what is presented at the SEGM conference is just as scientific as what is presented at the WPATH conference – it may be that the same research is interpreted differently, for example.

Will use psychotherapy to treat gender dysphoria

The theme of the conference that Wæhre attended in October was to develop an alternative to drug treatment for people with gender dysphoria, through psychological therapy methods.

Drug treatment, which often involves the use of puberty-delaying hormones, is offered at the department at Rikshospitalet that Wæhre heads, and is among the forms of treatment that WPATH recommends after a careful examination of the patient.

In recent years, there have been major discussions about how safe and effective gender confirmation treatment is, and at what point it should be legal to start such treatment. At Rikshospitalet, hormone therapy can be given from the age of 18, in some cases from the age of 16. For surgical procedures, you must be 18 years old.

At the conference in Athens, Wæhre participated in a panel debate about changes in the field of sexual medicine for adolescents.

The panel included Canadian psychologist Kenneth Zucker, who in the early 2000s was a leading figure in the treatment of children with gender dysphoria at his clinic in Toronto, but who has been criticized in the past decade for having in practice promoted a form of conversion therapy.

One of the other panelists, American "whistleblower" **Jamie Reed** , got politicians to shut down a gender-affirming treatment clinic in Missouri after she claimed it "harmed children ."

A third member of the panel, Finnish psychiatrist **Riittakerttu Kaltiala** , has compared today's treatment of children with gender dysphoria to a psychiatric scandal in the 1980s and 1990s where patients were "reawakened" through therapy to memories of abuse that had not actually occurred (so-called "recovered memory").

The panel that followed Wæhres discussed "The Transgender Zeitgeist: Exploring Gender as a Social Movement."

Here sat the American researcher **Lisa Littman** , who in 2018 launched the controversial theory *Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria (ROGD)* , which claims that a type of gender dysphoria occurs suddenly during adolescence, especially among biological girls, as a result of peer influence.

 <p>AMITA JASSI Consultant Clinical Psychologist at the National and Specialist OCD, BDD and Related Disorder Service for Children and Young People (South London and Maudsley NHS Trust). She has worked with this client group since 2006. Amita is the lead for the BDD branch of the service, as well as the research lead for the clinic. This is the only specialist service for young people with BDD in the UK. In her clinical role, she develops and delivers individually-tailored treatment packages, including intensive, home-based and inpatient treatment, as well as offering consultation and joint work with clinicians around the country. Amita has taught and trained nationally and internationally on child and adolescent OCD and BDD. She is the author of several books including 'Appearance Anxiety: a Guide to Understanding Body Dysmorphic Disorder for Young People, Families and Professionals' and 'The Parents' Guide to Body Dysmorphic Disorder'. She has over 50 publications in peer reviewed journals on OCD and BDD and engages in media work to increase awareness and understanding of these conditions. Amita is also a trustee for the BDD Foundation charity.</p>	 <p>ANNA HUTCHINSON Clinical psychologist specializing in adolescent mental health and physical health. She has been working with gender related distress, mainly in young people, for many years both in the UK's NHS and in private practice. She continues to teach, train and write on the topic.</p>
 <p>ANASTASSIS SPILIADIS Systemic and family psychotherapist, psychologist and supervisor/trainer. Anastassis works in London and Athens with individuals, couples, and families across the lifespan and specializes in embodied distress, eating disorders, relational difficulties and gender-related distress, alongside generic mental health difficulties. He is a visiting lecturer in King's College London and currently also works as a trainer through the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, training clinicians in the new youth gender services in the UK. He previously worked in the National Health Service, where he openly raised his concerns about overmedicalization of gender-related distress in adolescence.</p>	 <p>ANNE WÆHRE Pediatrician working within child and adolescent psychiatry at the Department of Pediatrics, Oslo University. Dr. Wæhre's research interests include child and adolescent mental health, and sexuality, gender identity and mental health in adolescence and disorders of sexual development. Dr. Wæhre recently spent a year as a Research Fellow in Pediatrics at Boston Children's Hospital.</p>
 <p>ANDREW HARTZ Practicing clinical psychologist in New York City. He was formerly a professor in the clinical psychology doctoral program at Long Island University, where he also completed his Ph.D. He completed his clinical internship at Columbia University Medical Center, and he also completed training at Mount Sinai Hospital and the William Alanson White Institute. For several years, he's written about political issues and mental health for outlets such as the Wall Street Journal, City Journal, Discourse, the Federalist, Real Clear Education, Heterodox Academy, and the New York Post.</p>	 <p>ARTEMIS TSITSIKA Elected associate professor of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine/Health at the Medical School of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA). She graduated from the NKUA Medical School and specialized in Pediatrics and subsequently trained in Adolescent Medicine and Health. She is the founder and head of the Adolescent Health Unit, Second Department of Pediatrics, P. & A. Kyriakou Children's Hospital and scientific supervisor of the "youth-friendly" WHO guidelines, NKUA programs, as well as other programs in child and adolescent medicine. She has been honored with numerous awards and the distinct award for the development of Adolescent Medicine/Health in Greece, has served as a visiting professor at Western Michigan University and an adjunct professor at the University of Kentucky, and has spoken at international conferences. Her research focuses on the quality of life and health of minors, including gynecology, sexuality, internet use, school health, and sexual abuse prevention. She has been actively involved in MoUs with the Ministries of Education and Health and is the author of books in Greece and internationally, including books for children. She supervises the European and other programs of the NGO For Adolescent Health (www.youth-life.gr), and serves as the president of the Hellenic/Greek Society for Adolescent Medicine/Health (www.youth-med.gr), and chief editor of the Journal of Developmental and Adolescent Health.</p>

Excerpt from the program for the SEGM conference in Athens last year, with some of the conference participants.

Was founded six years ago

The organizer behind the conference was the non-profit organization Society for Evidence-Based Gender Medicine (SEGM), which is based in Twin Falls, Idaho , USA.

The organization was founded in 2019 by American endocrinologist **William Malone** , American pediatrician **Julia W. Mason** , Australian psychiatrist **Roberto D'Angelo** , and American **Evgenia "Zhenya" Abbruzzese**, who is listed as a healthcare researcher.

SEGM's website states that the organization was created as a reaction to "the rapid spread" of guidelines for the medical treatment of young people with gender dysphoria, which, according to SEGM, are based on a weak research basis and risk promoting harmful treatment.

SEGM writes that the think tank collaborates with hundreds of researchers and clinicians in over 20 countries to evaluate available research on gender affirming treatment.

According to SEGM, the organization has no political, ideological, religious or economic ties.



SEGM founders. Clockwise from top left: William Malone, Julia W. Mason, Zhenya Abbruzzese and Roberto D'Angelo. Photo: SEGM

Mentions Norway as an example of growing attitude change

On its website, SEGM writes that an increasing number of Western countries have become aware of the significant concerns associated with gender-affirming treatment over the past three years.

These have become visible partly through statements from an increasing number of people who regret or have reversed treatment, and partly through systematic literature reviews that show that the benefits compared to the risks of the treatment are uncertain or not sustainable, according to SEGM.

Among the examples of countries that "have significantly reversed their previous practices for gender-affirming treatment or have signaled that they will do so in the near future" are England, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway.

Regarding Norway, SEGM refers to the State Commission for Inquiry into Health and Care Services (Ukom), which, based on two reports of concern from relatives in 2023, conducted a survey of the treatment options for children and young people with gender incongruence.

Ukom concluded that the national guidelines for gender-affirming treatment must be revised based on a Norwegian summary of knowledge, and that puberty-deferring, hormonal and surgical gender-affirming treatment for children and adolescents should be defined as "experimental treatment."

- Norway's Healthcare Investigation Board (NHIB/UKOM) has deemed puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones & surgery for children & young people experimental, determining that the current "gender-affirmative" guidelines are not evidence-based and must be revised. Norway's public health authority has signaled an intention to respond to UKOM's concerns with an adjustment to the current treatment guidelines.

Describes SEGM as a hub in a pseudoscientific network

In December 2023, the American civil rights organization Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) published a major report called CAPTAIN .

In the report, the SPLC identifies a network of various actors in the United States and other Western countries who, according to the center, are working to restrict healthcare services for transgender people by spreading misleading and false narratives about gender dysphoria and gender-affirming treatment.

These stories are presented as being based on reputable research. However, upon closer inspection, according to the SPLC, it turns out that the stories are, for example, based on studies conducted using a non-scientific method, on a selective representation of findings, or are based on preconceived assumptions, and are therefore defined by the SPLC as *pseudoscientific* .

In the mapped network, the actors play different roles:

- *The research actors* consist of members from academia, medicine, and health services who build narratives in the academic and public debate about what gender dysphoria is and how it should be treated.
- Other actors offer *legal services* and use these stories to develop arguments for clients in court cases and to justify legislative proposals, for example in state assemblies in the United States.

According to the SPLC, the Society for Evidence-Based Gender Medicine fulfills the role of a research actor and acts as a main hub in the pseudoscientific network.

The reason for this is that a large number of people associated with SEGM also appear as members of or participate in the platforms of other organizations in the network, and that a large number of publications by SEGM authors are written in collaboration with people associated with other actors in the network.

On June 4th of last year, SEGM was listed on the SPLC's map of hate groups.

In this article, Filter News has taken a closer look at how the think tank is linked to conservative forces in the United States.

Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)



- Grunnlagt i 1971 av borgerrettsaktivist og politiker Julian Bond og advokatene Morris Dees og Joseph J. Levin, Jr.
- Har hovedkvarter i Montgomery, Alabama.
- Representerer klienter i retten, og er kjent for å ha vunnet rettssaker på vegne av Ku Klux Klans voldsofre.
- Har siden 80-tallet kartlagt aktivitetene til hatgrupper i USA, med særlig fokus på rasisme og høyreekstremisme.
- Kartleggingene blir brukt som kilde av akademikere, media, og til og med FBI, men enkelte oppføringer har blitt kritisert for å være for dårlig begrunnet.
- Blir i hovedsak finansiert av donasjoner. Har med årenes løp bygget seg opp et betydelig fond som i 2023 utgjorde rundt 7,6 milliarder kroner.
- Var i 2019 gjenstand for flere medieoppslag om intern uro og dårlig arbeidskultur som førte til utskiftninger i lederstaben.
- Har for tiden rundt 240 ansatte etter en større oppsigelsesrunde i fjor sommer.

Close ties to British "power center"

Of the 27 people the SPLC has managed to link to SEGM, nine are also affiliated with **Genspect**, a British organization that has branches in many countries and which the SPLC refers to as a "powerhouse."

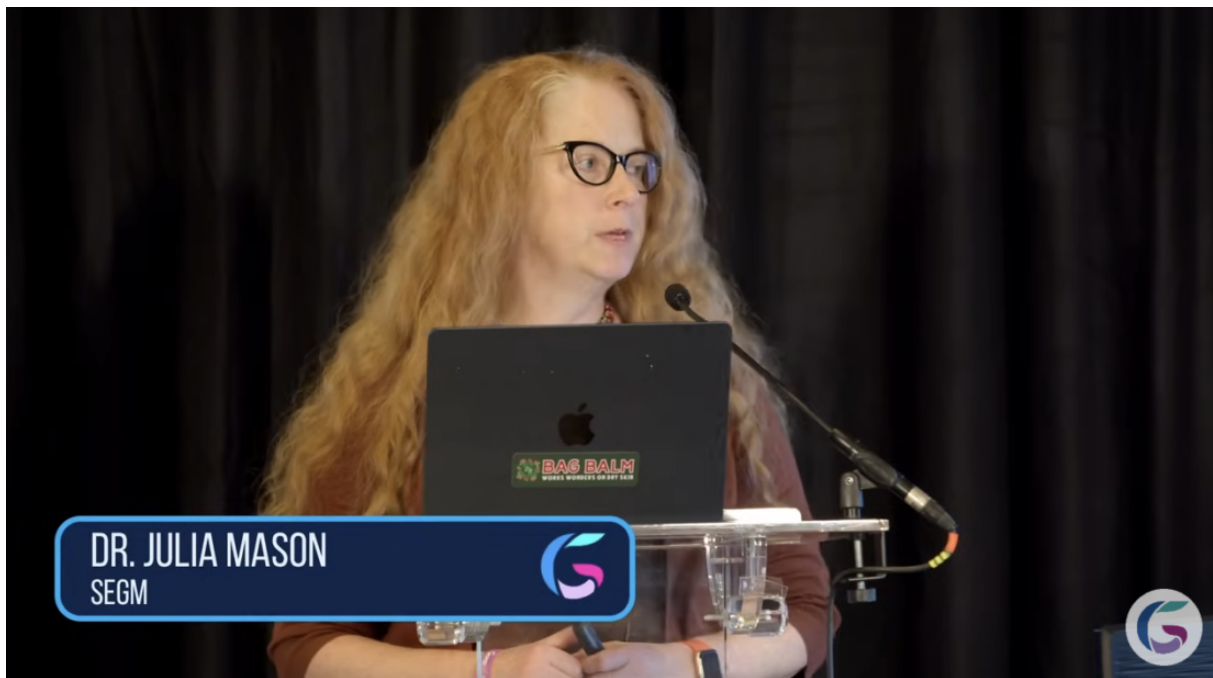
Genspect, like SEGM, was listed as an LGBTQ hate group by the SPLC in June 2024.

Among those the SPLC links to the organization are SEGM founders **Roberto D'Angelo** and **Julia Mason** (the latter is also listed as a Genspect team member).

On its website, Genspect describes itself as an international, non-partisan, multidisciplinary organization that collaborates with professionals, trans individuals, detransitioners (see *glossary further down in the article*) , and parent groups, to work for non-medical solutions to what they call gender dysphoria.

A review Filter News has done of what Genspect has posted on its YouTube channel , showing clips such as:

In the Genspect clips above, you'll find SEGM founder **Julia Mason** , SEGM advisor **Colin Wright** , and researchers **Lisa Littman** and **Michael Bailey** who are spokespeople for the ROGD theory that is regularly cited by SEGM members.



Filters screenshot of a clip featuring SEGM founder Julia Mason taken from Genspect's Youtube channel.

Genspect was founded in 2021 by Irish psychotherapist **Stella O'Malley** , who is a spokesperson for so-called "gender exploratory therapy" and who was critical of the fact that the law to ban conversion therapy in Ireland would affect treatments that sought to "suppress gender identity."

O'Malley has published the book *When Kids Say They're Trans* with American psychotherapist Lisa Marchiano and American psychologist Sasha Ayad – both SEGM board members . O'Malley and Ayad also produce the podcast *Gender: A Wider Lens* , which aired the episode "Is Trans Ideology a Surrogate Religion?" on January 4.

Last October, O'Malley was interviewed by the British website UnHerd about the "crisis facing children and parents" under the post caption:

"With culture wars causing family breakdown and self-diagnosis made easy via social media, are children being made sick by modern life?"



Filters screenshot of clip with Genspect's Stella O'Malley on UnHerd's youtube channel.

Most recently in December, Genspect UK launched a campaign to halt a clinically controlled trial of the effects of gender confirmation treatment planned by the British health service.

Connections to Norway and Scandinavian GENID

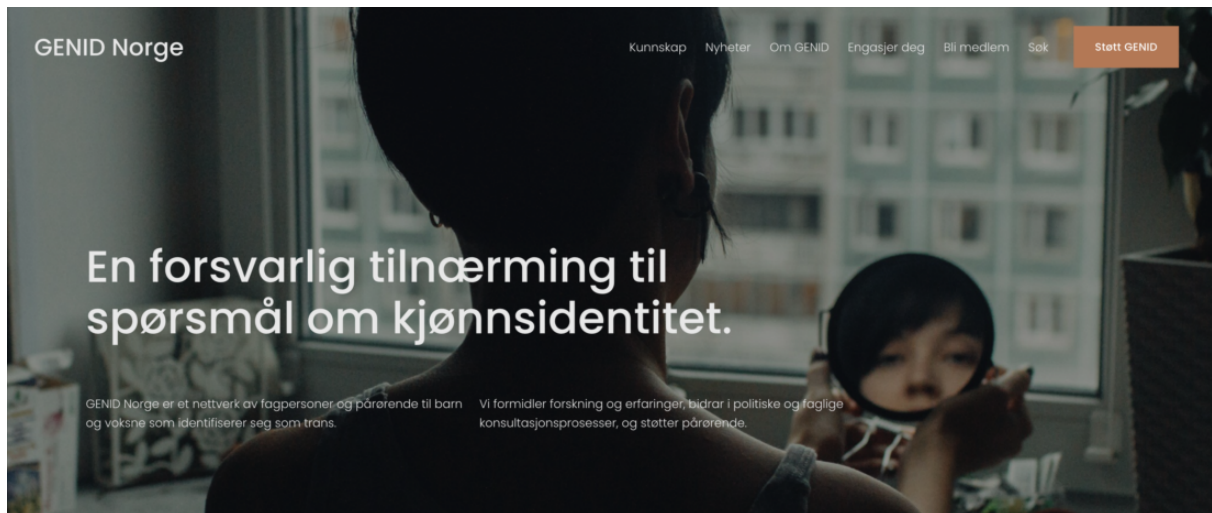
Through Filter's investigation of Genspect, it emerged that Norwegian art teacher **Marit Rønstad** is listed as a team member at the organization.

Genspect's website further states that Rønstad has met with a large number of parents of children and young people with gender dysphoria through the Scandinavian relatives' organization **GENID** .

GENID describes itself as a "network of parents, close relatives and professionals" in Norway, Finland, Sweden and Denmark who "have experienced that children who were in harmony with their biological gender in childhood and adolescence have suddenly identified outside their birth gender."

On the list of publications GENID Norway promotes on its new website , authors such as Roberto D'Angelo (SEGM), Michael Biggs (SEGM), Leor Sapir (Manhattan Institute), and psychiatrist Kenneth Zucker and ROGD researcher Lisa Littman (the last two participants at the Athens conference) appear.

In June last year, GENID chairwoman Marit Johanne Bruset commented on the listing of SEGM and Genspect on the SPLC's list of LGBTQ hate groups as "unfair and serious" .



Screenshot of GENID Norway's new website launched in April last year.

Rønstad writes to Filter Nyheter by email that she currently does not have an active role in the organizations, but that she has previously contributed actively, including by participating in the public debate together with the late professor emeritus **Avi Ring** .

Ring co-founded GENID in 2020. As an associate of SEGM, he engaged in the debate against drug treatment and published opinion articles together with SEGM founder William Malone.

Rønstad writes to Filter Nyheter that she was not familiar with the criticism of SEGM presented in this article, and that she has never heard of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC):

– SEGM and Genspect's sole mission was and is to promote the principles of evidence-based treatment for young people with gender dysphoria. The same applies to GENID. All three organizations emerged more or less in parallel around 2018–2020 out of a need for more knowledge about the assessment and treatment of gender dysphoria.

– I note that they (*SPLC, editor's note*) have established a "hate map". In addition, I notice that they have placed SEGM, Genspect, GENID and seemingly everyone else who questions the rapid medicalization of gender-exploring children and young people on this hate map.

– The SPLC's strategy is clearly to stifle any discussion that addresses important topics in science, evidence, and medical practice, for politically motivated reasons.

Genspect's website states that Rønstad has observed that children are increasingly "alienated from reality and the ability to distinguish between role-playing and real life. Marit believes this plays an important role in the exponential increase in children and young people who identify outside their gender assigned at birth."

When asked if this is a theory she still maintains today, Rønstad replies:

– I have worked with children and young people for almost 30 years and have observed a development in how we approach children's identity development. Today, boys and girls are faced with very narrow gender roles. It has become far too easy for the environment to place gender identity based on the choice of toys, clothes, hair and mannerisms. Children adapt to the expectations of their surroundings.

– Children have always played in different roles, be it as princesses, cats, trolls or other fantasy characters. Adults have largely taken part in role-playing as part of the game. In some children, the roles stick around longer than in others, so it would be natural to orient a child away from, for example, being a cat, to being a human.

Ordliste



- **Kjønnsinkongruens:** Når en person har en kjønnsidentitet som ikke samsvarer med det kjønn en er tildelt ved fødsel.
- **Kjønnsdysfori:** Et uttalt ubehag en person opplever på grunn av dette manglende samsvaret.
- **Kjønnsbekreftende behandling:** Ulike medisinske og fysiske inngrep for å bedre samsvaret mellom kjønnsidentitet og kjønnsuttrykk. Eksempler inkluderer hormonterapi, kirurgi, hårfjerning og kosmetiske inngrep.
- **Pubertetsblokkere:** Hormoner som utsetter puberteten ved å redusere den naturlige produksjonen av kjønns hormoner.
- **Transisjon:** Å gå fra å leve som et kjønn til et annet.
- **Detransisjon:** Å gå tilbake til det kjønn en er tildelt ved fødsel.
- **Sosial transisjon:** Å begynne å leve ut sin kjønnsidentitet i samfunnet, gjennom for eksempel navne- og pronomenbytte, klesstil og sminke.
- **Desistance:** Ulikt definert begrep om en situasjon der kjønnsdysfori forsvinner av seg selv, for eksempel etter puberteten.

Crisscrossing connections – also to Elon Musk

The Southern Poverty Law Center also identifies close connections between SEGM and other actors in the network, and further overlap between these actors in turn.

Among the organizations with such overlaps that the SPLC has mapped are:

- **Therapy First** , formerly **Gender Exploratory Therapy Association (GETA)** , founded by Stella O'Malley (Genspect), Joseph Burgo (Genspect), Sasha Ayad (SEGM), Roberto D'Angelo (SEGM), and Lisa Marchiano (SEGM), and which, according to SPLC's mapping, has 15 common members with SEGM
- **Institute for Comprehensive Gender Dysphoria Research (ICGDR)** , founded by Lisa Littman, with board members Lisa Marchiano (SEGM) and Stella O'Malley (Genspect)
- **Killarney Group** , launched by Genspect in 2023 with advisors Joseph Burgo (Genspect/GETA), Colin Wright (SEGM) and whistleblower Jamie Reed (who was on the panel with Wæhre at the Athens conference)
- **Gender Dysphoria Alliance (GDA)** founded by Lisa Littman (ICGDR) where Colin Wright's (SEGM) partner will sit on the board
- **Rethink Identity Medicine Ethics (RIME)** , founded by Lisa Marchiano (SEGM)

One of the experts who has a foot in several organizations is evolutionary biologist **Colin Wright** , who is affiliated with the conservative think tank **Manhattan Institute** , in addition to being an advisor at **Genspect** 's **Killarney Group** and **SEGM** .

Filter's review shows that Wright is very active on Elon Musk's platform X, where he mainly tweets about gender and biology, trans activism, cancel culture, and wokeism to his 249,000 followers.

(In connection with the ongoing wildfires in Los Angeles, Wright has also been concerned with how female firefighters and the DEI inclusion framework may have weakened the fire department's capacity to respond to the fires).

In anticipation of Trump's entry into the White House, Wright went public with X in December, saying he would help the incoming administration tackle "gender ideology, 'gender-affirming treatment,' and pseudoscience about gender . "

Musk often responds to Wright's posts with words of encouragement, and sometimes retweets posts as well.

From the fight against gay rights to "biblical truth" about transgenderism

Through the survey, SPLC finds that several of the actors in the network have connections to organizations that are themselves Christian conservatives or are closely associated with such organizations.

The SPLC draws a line between these organizations' advocacy work on transgender issues today and their work against gay rights two or three decades ago.

An example is the advocacy organization **American College of Pediatricians (ACPeds)** , which was supposedly founded in protest against the well-established American Academy of Pediatrics stating that research found no significant difference between children growing up with homosexual versus heterosexual parents.

ACPeds itself does not state any religious affiliation.

However, Filter's review shows that ACPeds members regularly appear with Catholic organizations and groups in the American Christian right landscape .

The investigations also show that ACPed's former president, **Michelle Cretella** , as recently as 2019, republished the organization's position against same-sex couples being able to raise children.

There she writes that "studies have shown significant risk for children who are exposed to the homosexual lifestyle" and that children who grow up in "natural families" are more stable in their gender identity.

The website states that ACPeds supports what it calls "heterosexual-affirming psychotherapy" to change "unwanted non-heterosexual attraction," and calls banning conversion therapy that requires therapists to affirm a person's gender identity "highly unethical, if not criminal."



Michelle Cretella delivers the talk, "This is what science tells us - biology is NOT hypocrisy," at a 2022 conference hosted by the Christian conservative advocacy group Eagle Forum. Filters screenshot of video broadcast

The SPLC 's investigation reveals that members of ACPeds and later key members of SEGM were part of a joint working group before SEGM was formed. The group included SEGM founder Roberto D'Angelo and SEGM board members Sasha Ayad and Lisa Marchiano . Later, SEGM and ACPeds members have also published research evaluations together.

The SPLC further states that ACPeds' **Michelle Cretella** and SEGM's **William Malone** and **Sasha Ayad** were among those who wrote statements of support in the foreword to a parent's guide to transgenderism in 2019.

Filter News has taken a closer look at the parenting guide .

It states, among other things, that *"Research findings suggest that transgender identities are heavily influenced by social contagion, mental health problems, popular culture, and current trends in drug treatment."*

The guide was published by the Minnesota Family Council, whose mission is to "nourish and defend families by restoring biblical truth to our culture," and was a collaborative project between, among others:

The conservative think tank **Heritage Foundation** , which is currently most in the news with its **Project 2025** , which attacks "the toxic normalization of transgenderism with drag queens and pornography invading school libraries" on its front page .

The Christian conservative movement **Family Policy Alliance** , which "promotes biblical citizenship" through political advocacy and believes that "God created man in his image and likeness, as male and female, which cannot be changed" (and which also sits on Project 2025's advisory board).

I am a Licensed Professional Counselor who works exclusively with teens who began questioning their gender in adolescence. I have seen the direct correlation between ill-conceived "gender affirmative" school policies and the development of sudden, painful, and unnecessary suffering in teens. Gender dysphoria often develops AFTER children are exposed to the concepts of gender ideology, sometimes in their own schools and classrooms without the parents' knowledge. With an emphasis on safety, respect, privacy, and constitutional rights, the Parent Resource Guide is a must-read for anyone who cares about a child attending public schools.

Sasha Ayad, M.Ed.
Licensed Professional Counselor
www.inspireteentherapy.com

The Parent Resource Guide is a godsend for parents. We live in a culture that tells children as young as age two that they can't trust the physical reality of their very own bodies. Through children's programs, drag queen story hours, mainstream and social media, the National Education Association and many more, children and teens are told that they might be trapped in the wrong body and that they will find happiness only through a lifetime of toxic chemicals and mutilating surgeries. If you are a parent, grandparent, mentor or professional who works with children, give this guide a close read. Then share its life saving facts with the children and young people you love.

Michelle Cretella, MD
Executive Director of the American College of
Pediatricians

This document is essential reading for any parent, educator, or even health care professional who wishes to understand factors contributing to the rapid increase of transgender identifying children and adolescents, and how to effectively respond to the unscientific and dangerous craze of "gender affirmation therapy".

William J. Malone, MD
Board Certified Endocrinologist

Filters excerpts from the statements of support from Sasha Ayad, William Malone, and Michelle Cretella in the foreword to the parent guide *Responding to the Transgender Issue – Parent Resource Guide* published in 2019 by the Minnesota Family Council.

Funded by fund supporting Roe v. Wade victor

Another Christian conservative connection the SPLC draws to **SEGM** and other actors in the network is the powerful legal advocacy group **Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF)** .

ADF drafts bills and funds and represents parties in legal proceedings to promote what they call "religious freedoms, freedom of expression, the sanctity of life, marriage and family, and parental rights" in society.

It was ADF's strategic legal campaign that ultimately led the U.S. Supreme Court to throw out federal protections for women's right to self-determined abortion in 2022.

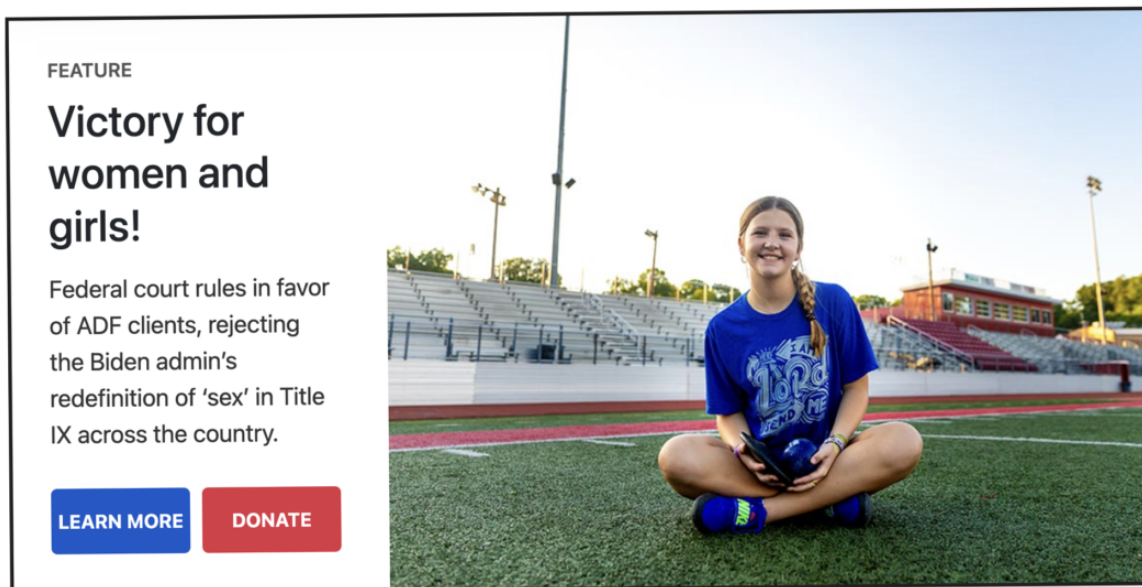
A closer look at the organization shows that it was founded in 1994 by men with connections to the evangelical Christian movement.

According to the Washington Post, ADF's founder has questioned the separation of church and state, and the organization's summer course aims to inspire a "distinct Christian worldview in every area of the law," a course U.S. Supreme Court Justice **Amy Coney Barrett** has taught five times .

Current Speaker of the House of Representatives, **Mike Johnson** , was a former ADF attorney , ADF's former director Mike Farris is a friend of former Vice President **Mike Pence** , and the organization worked closely with **Jeff Sessions** when he was Attorney General in the first Trump administration.

In the fall of 2023, ADF's director, Kristen Waggoner, told the New Yorker magazine that the organization's next priority was to combat "the radical gender identity ideology that infiltrates the law."

Republican politicians credit the ADF with drafting bills in several states in the United States to ban transgender people from participating in sports, and the ADF's international branch argued in 2015 before the European Court of Human Rights that transgender people must be sterilized before they can change their legal gender.



Filters screenshot of featured article on Alliance Defending Freedoms (ADF) website , retrieved January 12, 2025.

In 2023, London-based openDemocracy revealed that a large part of ADF's income comes from so-called *donor-based funds* that manage and distribute contributions from anonymous donors.

According to openDemocracy 's mapping, such funds are used to channel funds to what the news magazine classifies as 36 American far-right groups that work against abortion and LGBTQ rights.

Among these funds is the Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund, which over a four-year period between 2017 and 2020 gave around NOK 42 million to ADF.

At the same time, the Southern Poverty Law Center finds in its survey that the Fidelity fund was SEGM's largest known source of funding in 2021, with a donation equivalent to around 3.2 million kroner.

Similarly, openDemocracy and SPLC's surveys show that the Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program has also channeled funds to both ADF and SEGM.

Among those receiving funds from Fidelity and Vanguard are also several Christian conservative organizations such as the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Americans United for Life and the Family Research Council, openDemocracy's overview shows.

Another example of money flows going in both ADF and SEGM's direction is the libertarian, Virginia-based Charles Koch Institute, which manages political donations for the Koch family.

According to [SPLC's mapping](#), in 2020 the Charles Koch Institute gave millions in donations to **the Alliance Defending Freedom** (about 2.4 million kroner), **the Heritage Foundation** (about 5.1 million kroner), **the Manhattan Institute**, where SEGM advisor Colin Wright is based (about 3.4 million kroner), and to **the Edward Charles Foundation** (about 11.1 million kroner), which in turn gave around 850,000 kroner to **SEGM** that year.

(The Charles Koch Institute changed its name three years ago to Stand Together Fellowships).

Witnesses in support of restrictive bills – often for payment

Despite SEGM stating on its website that the organization opposes the politicization of trans health, SPLC's mapping, independent media reports, and email leaks show that key SEGM individuals have appeared as expert witnesses in courtrooms and legislative assemblies in the United States on several occasions.

There, SEGM members have testified in support of a party or a bill that in practice restricts the treatment options or rights of transgender people.

Other actors in the SPLC's mapped network, such as **ACPeds**, also regularly appear as such expert witnesses.

Does SEGM support legislative efforts to regulate gender medicine?⊖

SEGM **opposes** the politicization of transgender care. At the same time, SEGM recognizes that medicine has the potential to both help and harm and that regulation of medicine is a core and necessary function in order to safeguard patients from undue harm. Each country has a unique medical system, varying mechanisms for financing healthcare, and different approaches to regulating healthcare. It is up to these entities to work within their legal frameworks to balance the vital importance of protecting the patient-physician relationship with the mandate to safeguard youth from harm.

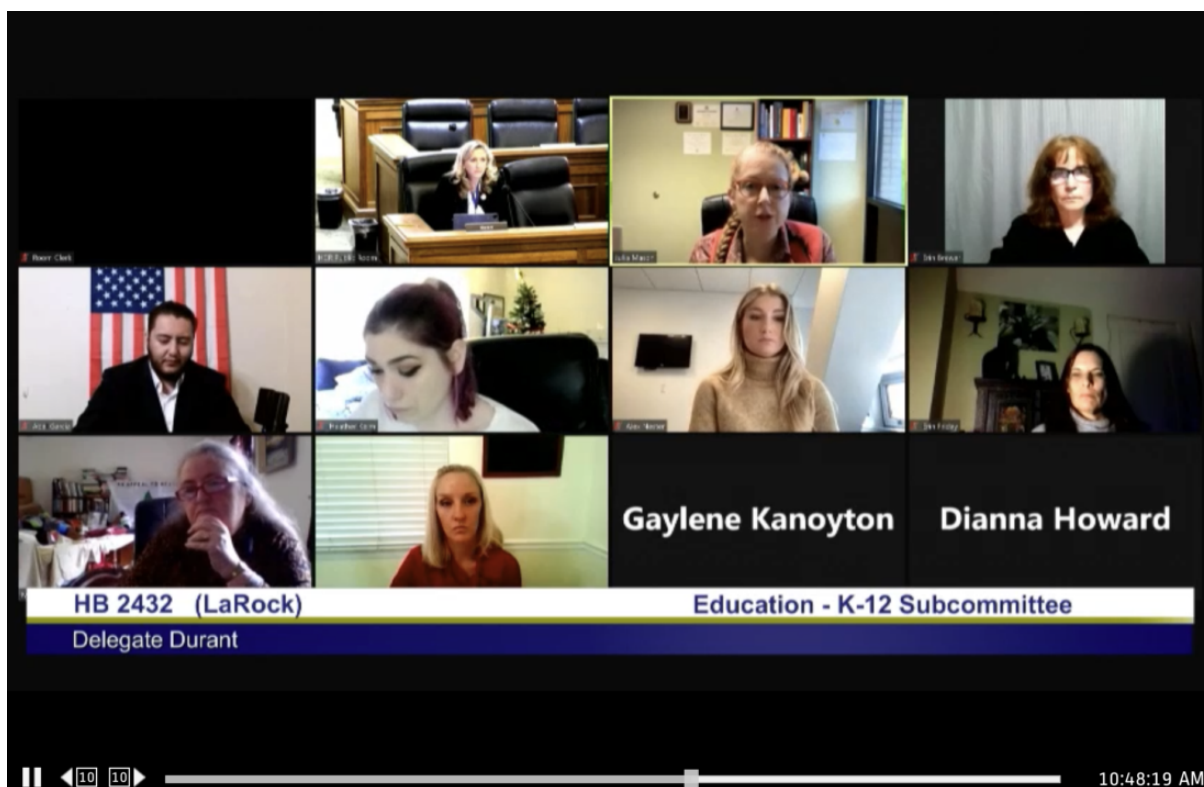
One of the examples from the SPLC report is when SEGM founder **Julia Mason** appeared as an expert witness when the **Virginia** state assembly in 2023 considered a bill that would prohibit schools from supporting a student's social transition without parental consent.

Filter News has reviewed [the video broadcast](#) of the part of the hearing in which Mason participated.

There, Mason says she supports the bill because social transition "has a powerful impact on a child" and "concretizes what could otherwise be a transient transgender identity."

In support of this, Mason says that what has previously been seen is that 67–90 percent of children with gender dysphoria end up accepting their biological sex by the time they reach adolescence when they do not undergo such a transition – a theory called desistance.

Among the expert witnesses was also **Genspect** board member Erin Friday.



Filters screenshot of the video feed from the Virginia State Assembly Education Committee, where SEGM founder Julia Mason testified on January 30, 2023.


Through independent news reports, Filter has found additional examples of SEGM and other actors in SPLC's mapped network influencing political decisions about trans health.

In 2023, the Miami Herald revealed that **Florida's** state administration had paid seven handpicked consultants hundreds of thousands of dollars to contribute to a report on drug treatment for gender dysphoria.

Based on the report, the Florida Department of Health decided in 2022 that costs for puberty blockers and hormone therapy would no longer be covered by the state's Medicaid public assistance program.

Among the highest-paid consultants on the list was Canadian researcher Romina Brignardello-Petersen, who previously worked for SEGM, according to the newspaper. For her work on the Florida report, she received an amount equivalent to around 340,000 kroner.

The Miami Herald also found that several of the consultants had traveled across the United States as expert witnesses in court and legislative proceedings in red states such as Alabama, Arkansas, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas.



ROMINA BRIGNARDELLO, DDS, MSC, PHD (CANADA)
Associate professor, Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact, McMaster University; GRADE working group member; methodologist for 20+ clinical practice guidelines and author of 80+ systematic reviews, including a synthesis of the best available evidence addressing the effects of puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and surgeries commissioned by the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration. Dr. Brignardello is leading a team conducting systematic reviews of evidence for social transition and hormonal and surgical interventions for youth with gender dysphoria.

Brignardello's introduction in the conference program of the SEGM conference in New York in October 2023 , where Senior Consultant Anne Wæhre also participated.

In September 2023, the Huffington Post revealed that state authorities in the United States had spent several million kroner paying a traveling group of experts to testify in such legal proceedings.

Among the regulars was endocrinologist **Paul Hruz** from **ACPeds** , who alone received over 400,000 kroner to defend a ban on gender confirmation treatment for young people in Arkansas.

Similarly, Canadian CBC News revealed that psychologist James Cantor had served as an expert witness in 25 different cases in the United States over the course of two years, and that Cantor said he had **doubled his income** as a result of this activity.

As a survey by the New York Times shows, this fits into a pattern in which Republicans have intensified efforts to regulate trans rights issues in the states in recent years.

An overview from the Huffington Post shows that the number of such bills exploded in 2023 and 2024 with over 600 each year, distributed across thematic areas such as toilets, sports, education and healthcare.

According to the Huffington Post , the efforts of several of the experts who repeatedly testify in support of restricting healthcare services for transgender people appear to be religiously motivated.

Among other things, **Hruz is said to have stated** that being transgender "*probably dates back to some of the earliest heresies in the history of the church*" , and another expert, **Patrick Lappert** , has stated that he considers gender-affirming surgery to be "*diabolical in every sense of the word*" .

Secretly coordinated with Republican representative

Among the sources the SPLC cites in its report showing the collaboration between several of the actors in the network are 2,600 pages of email exchanges that were posted online by former activist and detransitioner, Elisa Rae Shupe.

Based on the email leak, the news magazine Mother Jones revealed in March 2023 that Republican Representative **Fred Deutsch** of **South Dakota** had secretly coordinated with 18 activists, clinicians, and attorneys from organizations such as the Heritage Foundation, ADF, ACPeds, Child & Parental Rights Campaign, and the Family Policy Alliance on a bill to ban gender-affirming treatment for young people.

Filter News has reviewed parts of the leaked material.

The emails reveal that the actors in the group discussed frequently with each other the wording of the bill and what they should present as scientific evidence – at one point summarized in a “legislative packet” – to get the bill through in South Dakota and similar proposals in other states.

Several of the emails describe that coordination must take place in secret. For example, on August 17, 2019, State Representative Deutsch writes to the recipient list:

"As always, please do not share this with the media. The longer we can fly under the radar, the better."

Much of the email correspondence lists SEGM founder William Malone as one of the recipients. A search for Malone in the leaked material yields over 500 hits.

Other parts of the material show that several of the actors had a religious approach to the matter.

In a motivating email to Deutsch the same day that consideration of the bill in South Dakota began, attorney **Vernadette Broyles** of the **Child & Parental Rights Campaign** , which is also affiliated with **ADF** , writes :

"Do not be afraid, nor be afraid. Know that the Lord is with you. The children of South Dakota belong to Him."

From: Vernadette Broyles
Sent: 1/29/2020 7:57:55 AM
To: "Fred Deutsch" <Fred.Deutsch@sdlegislature.gov>
Cc: "QUENTIN VAN METER" <kidendo@comcast.net>, "James Shupe (Formerly Jamie Shupe)" <jamie.shupe@yahoo.com>, "Laidlaw Michael" <mike@drilaidlaw.com>, "Andre Van Mol" <95andrev@gmail.com>, "Paul Hruz" <hruz_p007@att.net>, "Lappert Patrick" <patrick@lappertplasticsurgery.com>, "Bernard Hudson, MD" <loyolamd82@gmail.com>, "Natasha Chart" <natasha.chart@gmail.com>, "Mary McAlister" <mmcalister@childparentrights.org>, "Cretella Michelle" <drncretella@gmail.com>, "Katherine Cave" <kelseycoalition@gmail.com>, "David Pickup" <davidpickuplmt@gmail.com>, "Eunie Smith" <alaeagle@charter.net>, "McCaleb Gary" <mccgsm@gmail.com>, "Glenn Ridder" <glenn.ridder@outlook.com>, "Horvath Hacs" <birdcatcher9@yahoo.com>, "Robbins Jane" <rlrobb123@gmail.com>, "Margaret Clarke" <margaretclarke317@icloud.com>, "Sharp Matt" <msharp@adfllegal.org>, "McHugh Paul" <pmchugh1@jhmi.edu>, "Monique Robles MD" <pamosa27@comcast.net>, "Mast Richard" <RMast@lc.org>, "Brooks Roger" <rbrooks@adfllegal.org>, "Timothy Millea MD" <TMillea@qcora.com>, "Heyer Walt" <waltsbook@yahoo.com>, "William Malone" <malone.will@gmail.com>, "Shafer Jeff" <jshafer@adfllegal.org>, "Chris Motz" <cmotz@sdatholicconference.org>, "Jon Hansen" <jon.hansen@sdlegislature.gov>
Subject: Re: Today we go to battle in SD

Know that many have prayed and are praying for you this day. Do not back down, nor should you be afraid. Know that the Lord is with you. The children of South Dakota belong to him. He is jealous over them. Let his jealousies be spoken forth in the House of Representatives of South Dakota today so that his children would be made safe. Know you are HIS representative today. Do not be afraid. Stand firm in what is right.

Vernadette
Sent from my iPhone

Filter's screenshot of the email in the leaked material, Filter's highlighting of William Malone in yellow.

Yale experts: "Promoting misleading and unscientific content"

SEGM was also referred to as a professional authority when the **Texas** state authorities, led by Attorney General **Ken Paxton (R)**, advocated criminalizing drug treatment of young transgender people as child abuse in February 2022.

In response, professionals at, among others, **Yale School of Medicine** drafted a so-called white paper, in which they write that "*SEGM is not a recognized scientific organization*" and that "*SEGM's core members (...) promote misleading and unscientific content.*"

Filter News has taken a closer look at the document.

There, the Yale clinicians criticize SEGM for misrepresenting the data in the study Steensma et al. (2013), which reportedly supports the claim that 61–98 percent of children with experienced gender dysphoria re-identify with their biological sex during puberty (desistance).

These figures were used by Texas state officials to argue for the bill, experts point out. (The figures also roughly match what SEGM co-founder Julia Mason referred to in her testimony in Virginia, see above).

However, the Yale clinicians write, in Steensma's study, everyone who did not want to participate in the study or who did not respond at all was categorized as "desisters," and Steensma himself has declared that the study cannot be used to calculate the proportion of so-called "desisters" versus "persisters."

"SEGM misuses Steensma's data by counting non-responders as if they were individuals with resolved gender dysphoria," the Yale clinicians summarize, calling it a "gross violation of the scientific method."

In the same document, the Yale clinicians criticize the use of Littman's 2018 ROGD study as scientific evidence, pointing out that the journal had to require a comprehensive correction of the original research article after a number of methodological errors were discovered.

Among other things, the study was based on parent surveys instead of clinical data, where parents had been recruited via "anti-trans websites," the Yale clinicians write .

Norwegian doctor in the USA: – An ideological front organization

– SEGM's stated goal of working for more research to inform the treatment of people with gender incongruence is a goal that is probably shared by everyone who works with people with gender incongruence. This goal, and the name *Society for Evidence-Based Gender Medicine* , give the impression that this is a serious, scientific player with clinical weight.

– Unfortunately, SEGM is not an organization that bases its work on a research-based understanding of the field. This is very clear when you look at the connections SEGM has with other organizations with a more clear anti-LGBT philosophy, such as American far-right and Christian fundamentalist groups, described by the SPLC.

This is what Ole-Petter Hamnvik , a specialist in internal medicine and associate professor at Harvard Medical School, wrote to Filter Nyheter via email. Hamnvik works daily with gender-affirming hormone therapy in Boston, USA, and is a member and certified supervisor in WPATH. He is also affiliated with the Health Center for Gender and Sexuality in Oslo.

In late October, Hamnvik co-authored the report *Health Care for Minor Patients with Gender Incongruence: Legal and Medical Perspectives* , which echoes much of the SPLC's criticism of SEGM. The report was commissioned and partially funded by the Patient Organization for Gender Incongruence (PKI).

Hamnvik writes to Filter Nyheter that he believes it is also clear from the positions of the organization's lecturers and members that SEGM is not a neutral organization:

– SEGM's view is very different from the support that gender affirming treatment is given by all the larger and more established organizations that clinicians, researchers and policymakers rely on when it comes to other disciplines – a clear sign that SEGM is not based on accepted science.

Hamnvik mentions factors such as the fact that SEGM has no scientific department, that the co-founders' publications are mostly letters to the editors of medical journals that are more likely to be considered expressions of opinion, and that several of the co-founders have little personal knowledge of trans health despite their doctorates:

– For example, William Malone is an endocrinologist who has not treated transgender people – he treats diabetes. Therefore, the group lacks not only scientific gravitas, but also clinical credibility.

– My impression is that SEGM is an ideological front organization whose main purpose is to give scientific legitimacy to the right-wing conservative and Christian fundamentalist views of the organizations they are affiliated with.

Hamnvik believes his opinion of SEGM is shared by the vast majority within the established professional communities in the United States.

– Must expect strong reactions

Hamnvik writes to Filter Nyheter that he agrees that the view of gender dysphoria and trans health promoted by SEGM is pseudoscience.

– A good example is ROGD, which is a discredited theory based on a single flawed research article, where the research was not conducted in a scientifically sound manner and where the findings have not been replicated since , but which is still promoted by SEGM as a reliable theory.

– No medical organization has accepted this as a real diagnosis, and the consensus is that parents' impression that gender incongruence arose suddenly does not reflect the youth's experience of their gender – they have often experienced their gender as different from the sex assigned at birth for a long time before sharing this with their parents.

Another example Hamnvik mentions is what he believes is the misuse of scientific terminology, such as when SEGM describes the evidence base for medical treatment as being of "low quality".

– This is the case for many medical interventions that are considered standard, have a very technical definition when it comes to knowledge reviews, based on the GRADE methodology, and which in no way means that this evidence base cannot be used to make medical recommendations.

At the same time, Hamnvik claims that SEGM overlooks all research that supports views that differ from their own – research that formed the basis for WPATH's recommendations and, as he adds, is supported by 66 pages of references to peer-reviewed research.

Regarding SEGM's desire to develop psychotherapeutic treatment pathways for gender dysphoria, which was the topic of the conference in October, Hamnvik says that it sounds appealing on the surface, as one does not want to overmedicate conditions where other measures may be more effective and safe.

But referring to, among other things, the research summary on p. 68 of WPATH's latest standard , he writes:

– The problem is that psychotherapeutic treatment of gender incongruence is not effective. Such treatments quickly end up as conversion treatments, where one tries to lead the child to become cisgender.

Regarding Wæhre's participation at the conference, Hamnvik comments that "it's a free country":

– But when you express support for an organization that focuses on opposing health care for the patient group for which you yourself are assigned to lead the treatment – a treatment that the rest of the professional community considers medically necessary – you must also expect strong reactions.



Ole-Petter Hamnvik. Photo: Ken Jones Photography

Wæhre: – Important to listen to different voices

Senior consultant Anne Wæhre at Oslo University Hospital told Filter News that she is familiar with the criticism of SEGM from the past. This includes criticism of the organization as an LGBTQ hate group and the claim that it promotes pseudoscience:

– Yes, some believe that and others do not. It depends on which sources you go to. Here they will not agree with it themselves. And the ones you highlight (*SPLC, editor's note*) are not neutral either. So it is not as simple as saying that this is the opinion of the crowd.

Wæhre is not aware of any ties to evangelical Christian circles. She has been told that people associated with SEGM have served as expert witnesses in various legal and judicial processes in the United States, but believes that this does not mean that SEGM's conferences are not relevant for professionals working with gender incongruence.

She describes the organization as serious:

- This is a collection of people who are trying to find more evidence about whether drug treatment is effective and whether it is safe.
- I think that for us as professionals it is incredibly important to listen to different voices in this field. I first attended the world conference in Lisbon (*the WPATH conference, editor's note*), which may have a different view, before I attended this conference in Athens.

Regarding the fact that some of the participants at the SEGM conference are outspoken supporters of controversial theories such as *Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria* , Wæhre says:

- Some will probably say that there is no good research to support that. And then others will point to research that shows that that is exactly where the increase has been, among young biological girls in their teens.

– Trying to balance the different points of view

Regarding the scientific basis supporting drug treatment, Wæhre states:

- What the literature reviews show is that there is unfortunately little evidence of whether the treatment is effective and whether it is safe. And that is not surprising, because there are relatively few cases, we have not been able to follow the patients over such a long period of time, and most countries do not have a national treatment service, so it is difficult to do good studies.

– That is the situation we are in. And then we have to consider whether we should still provide treatment – because we still offer that – and find out who will benefit from such treatment.

- The lack of consensus on the effect of the treatment makes this very demanding. That is precisely why we need to reach out and listen to different communities.

– Critics believe that SEGM shapes a narrative in the public that is used by conservative forces in American politics to limit treatment options for transgender people. Isn't there a danger that ignorant medical personnel in Norway will be drawn into a larger, political agenda?

– We are not ignorant, we have heard this criticism. It is possible that there are people who have been to this conference or previous conferences who have opinions that we do not recognize. Nevertheless, I believe that it is a useful forum to participate in.

- There are many like us at OUS who try to be in the middle and balance the different points of view.



Senior physician Anne Wæhre. Photo: OUS

OUS: – Supports participation to gather knowledge

Filter News has asked Oslo University Hospital a number of questions about Wæhre's participation at the SEGM conference in October.

Among other things, we wondered whether OUS was aware of who was behind the Athens conference when it was decided that Wæhre would participate, and whether the hospital vouches for SEGM as a credible scientific organization.

We also asked whether the hospital is considering offering psychotherapeutic treatment to people with gender dysphoria and in what way OUS believes such treatment differs from conversion therapy.

Clinic Director **Kim Tønseth** at the Clinic for Surgery and Specialized Medicine at Oslo University Hospital responds by email:

– We would like to clarify that the patient group, like all other patients, should be met with respect. Oslo University Hospital should offer good and equal healthcare services to all patients and relatives regardless of background, and all patients should feel safe and cared for.

– On a general basis, Oslo University Hospital will contribute to a safe and evidence-based treatment offer for this patient group, and clearly distances itself from conversion therapy.

– **Wæhre participated in both WPATH and SEGM conferences in 2024. OUS therefore encourages and supports participation in conferences to share and gather knowledge. It is not problematic for our employees to participate in conferences that bring together professionals who represent a different approach than the one we offer.**

– OUS has no further comments on the issues related to SEGM.

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