Potential discrepancies in health care for lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender patients might not be the first thing on the minds of all medical professionals, but for physician and MSU alumnus Henry Ng, the topic has become the basis of his career.

Ng shared some of his clinical experience and thoughts on ways the medical community could better serve LBGT patients with about 20 students and interested community members Friday in Brody Hall. He was invited to speak at MSU by members of the LBGT Resource Center.

As the president-elect of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association and clinical director of the PRIDE Clinic, an Ohio clinic that caters specifically to LBGT patients, Ng said he has seen some LBGT community members who have felt uncomfortable with their doctors because of intentional or unintended discrimination.

Issues such as partner visitation rights, custody and decision making rights for LBGT couples in charge of a minor, pediatric care for children who are just coming out or confused about their gender and sensitivity when discussing sexual orientation or gender are often topics that go under the radar in medical discussion, Ng said.

“This can happen in small ways, but sometimes in egregious ways,” he said. “It certainly creates a very negative experience.”

Biological science junior Keith Wiley said the discussion gave him a better idea of how discrimination against those of different sexual orientations could seep into something as simple as proper medical care.

“I know discrimination exists, but it’s to the point (that) it’s creating medical social problems,” Wiley said.

Ng said more attention needs to be paid to LBGT health, and during the discussion, he offered potential ways problems could be addressed, such as more assertiveness on part of the patients, better education of health officials and a greater understanding of the issues at hand.

Allegra Smith, a professional writing and women’s and gender studies junior and program media assistant for the LBGT Resource Center, said Ng’s visit could bring light to a topic not often discussed, as well as potentially provide new opportunities for those looking to support LBGT rights.

“It’s a great way to see how public health concerns can intersect with advocacy and awareness of LBGT concerns,” Smith said.

The road to becoming an advocate for equal medical treatment was a long one, Ng said, and was not always an easy path.

Even though he didn’t go into the medical field thinking he would work toward the medical rights of LBGT patients, Ng said the journey has been worthwhile and he plans to continue his work with the topic.

“It’s been a long ride with a lot of ups and downs,” Ng said. “I didn’t necessarily expect to do this with my life, but here I am.”
MSU alumnus shares insight on improving LBGT health care