

# Anti-Racism at the Bedside: Teaching Medical Students Skills to Eliminate Racism and Bias in Clinical Encounters

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## INTRODUCTION

Systemic racism can impact every aspect of clinical skills, including history-taking, the physical exam, laboratory interpretation, note-writing, oral presentations, and decision-making. Medical students need to know and practice skills to counter racism, bias, and stereotypes that negatively impact patient care and health outcomes.

## METHODS

- In order to combat inequities in patient care that perpetuate broader health disparities, we created a 75-minute interactive session called “Anti-racism at the Bedside” for pre-clinical medical students
- The session included pre-reading assignments and utilized small-group activities
- Faculty and Equity and Justice Fellows co-taught the sessions
- All facilitators had a one-hour preparation session beforehand that covered the session content and addressed questions, as well as separate meetings with co-facilitators to plan logistics

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Recognize and assess for structural factors that influence health
- Identify ways that bias can impact clinical encounters and patient management
- Apply skills to promote equity and minimize bias in clinical care and decision-making
- Explain how the language used in presentations and note-writing can transmit bias
- Use examples of neutral language instead of stigmatizing language

*Small group discussion (8min)*

Review the NEJM article regarding racial bias in pulse oximetry measurements:

- What surprised you about this study?
- What may have led to this issue to begin with?
- What could be done to prevent this from happening in the future?
- What take home points do you want to remember? What could you do differently in a clinical environment knowing this information?

Each small group reports out take home points on return (3 minutes)

*Small group (10 minutes)*

Review the patient note used in the study <sup>6</sup> written with stigmatizing language:

Mr. R is a 28-year old sickle cell patient with chronic left hip osteomyelitis who comes to the ED stating he has “10/10 pain” “all up in my arms and legs.” He is narcotic dependent and in our ED frequently. At home he reportedly takes 100 mg OxyContin BID and oxycodone 5 mg for breakthrough pain. Over the past few days, he says that he has taken 2 tabs every 4-6 hours. About 3 months ago, patient states that the housing authority moved him to a new neighborhood and he now has to wheel himself in a manual wheelchair up 3 blocks from the bus stop.

Yesterday afternoon, he was hanging out with friends outside McDonald’s where he wheeled himself around more than usual and got icy injured due to the heat. He believes that this, along with some “stressful situations,” has precipitated his current crisis. Pain is aching in quality, severe (10/10), and has not been helped by any of the narcotic medications he says he has already taken.

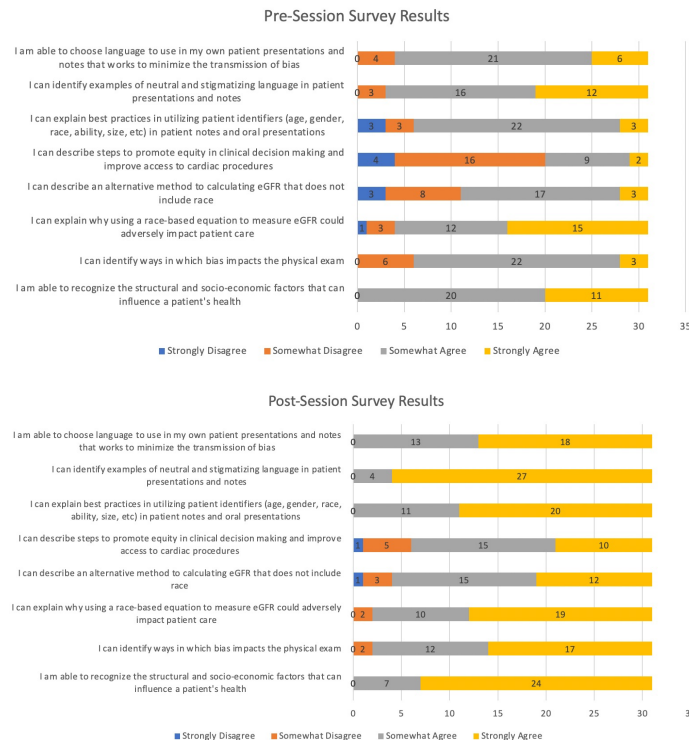
On physical exam, he appears to be in distress. He has no fever and his pulse ox is 96% on RA. The rest of the physical exam is normal although he reports tenderness to palpation on the left hip.

1. Identify areas of stigmatizing language  
2. Write a corrected version utilizing neutral language

*Small group reports out*

## RESULTS

- 4 sessions were held in November 2021 via Zoom with 40 second-year medical students
- 31 students completed a retrospective pre- and post-survey utilizing Likert-scale questions based on the learning objectives
- Survey data showed improvements in every question



## CONCLUSION

Teaching current and future healthcare providers to think critically about how bias impacts patients and communities and equipping them with tools to begin dismantling oppressive and racist structures in medicine is achievable, and is crucial to actualizing a just and equitable health system. We hope our pilot session can be further developed, expanded, and integrated into the medical school curriculum, resident training, and faculty development.

## REFERENCES

Pre-session reading assignments:

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