Health Disparities and Implicit Bias

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Disclosure statement

• In the past 24 months, we have had no relevant financial relationships with the manufacturer(s) of any commercial product(s) and/or provider(s) of commercial service(s) discussed in this event.

• We do not intend to discuss an unapproved/investigative use of a commercial product/device in my presentation.
Who am I

- Community Assistant Dean of Michigan State University College of Human Medicine: Flint Campus
Bio

- Undergraduate: Michigan State University
- Medical School: Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Residency: Family Medicine, St John Providence Hospital
- Masters of Public Health: University of Michigan
The Books I’m Reading

HOW MUSIC WORKS
DAVID BYRNE

AN AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LATINX HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES
PAUL ORTIZ

TINY CHANGES, Remarkable Results
ATOMIC HABITS
James Clear
Acknowledgements

• Lisa Lowery, MD

• Elizabeth Lyons, Ed.D
Agenda

● What is a health disparity?
● Causes of disparities
● What is implicit bias?
● How does Implicit bias impact Health Disparities?
● How do we mitigate bias?
Norms for Discussion

- This is a safe, judgement-free zone where mutual respect must be exercised
- Commit to learning, understanding and not debating
- Comment to share rather than persuade
- Don’t appoint people to speak for an entire social group/culture/race
- Criticize ideas but not individuals
Setting the Stage:

• It okay to not have all the solutions/answers

• No one is perfect

• Be less certain, be MORE CURIOUS

• Rest in moments of discomfort and remain curious

• Message privately if needed
Health is more than absence of disease; it is about economics, education, environment, empowerment, and community. The health and well being of the people is critically dependent upon the health system that serves them. It must provide the best possible health with the least disparities and respond equally well to everyone.

-Jocelyn Elders
What is a health disparity?

**CDC Definition:** Health disparities are preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations
What words stand out about this definition?

Type some answers in the chat!
Healthy People 2020 Definition

A particular type of health difference that is closely linked with economic, social, or environmental disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater social or economic obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, age, or mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.”
What words stand out about this definition?

Type some answers in the chat!
Examples of Health Disparities: Question 1

Children living in poverty are how many times more likely to have poor health, compared to children living in high-income households?

A) 2x
B) 3x
C) 10x
D) 7x
Examples of Health Disparities: Question 2

What is the greatest difference in life expectancy observed between U.S. counties?

A) 2 years
B) 10 years
C) 15 years
D) 7 years
Examples of Other Health Disparities

Type some answers in the chat!
Figure 1: Health Disparities are Driven by Social and Economic Inequities

- Economic Stability
- Neighborhood and Physical Environment
- Education
- Food
- Community, Safety, & Social Context
- Health Care System

- Employment
- Income
- Expenses
- Debt
- Medical bills
- Support

- Housing
- Transportation
- Parks
- Playgrounds
- Walkability
- Zip code/ geography

- Literacy
- Language
- Early childhood education
- Vocational training
- Higher education

- Food security
- Access to healthy options

- Social integration
- Support systems
- Community engagement
- Stress
- Exposure to violence/trauma
- Policing/justice policy

- Health coverage
- Provider & pharmacy availability
- Access to linguistically and culturally appropriate & respectful care
- Quality of care

Health and Well-Being:
- Mortality, Morbidity, Life Expectancy, Health Care Expenditures, Health Status, Functional Limitations

Kaiser Family Foundation
Why is this important?

• National Academy of Medicine (Institute of Medicine) notes that bias, stereotyping, and prejudice play an important role in persisting healthcare disparities.

• Bias may unconsciously influence the way information about and individual is process leading to unintended disparities.
Implicit Bias

- The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

- Implicit biases involve associations outside conscious awareness that lead to a negative evaluation of a person on the basis of irrelevant characteristics such as race or gender.

- The implicit associations may not necessarily align with our declared beliefs or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.

Our Capacity

The unconscious mind can process up to 11 million pieces of information per second.

The conscious mind can only process about 40-50 pieces of information per second.

Source: Cook Ross, Inc. 2011
Implicit Bias in Action

What Word Should Go in the Blank:

Young_____

Night ______

Happy_____

What would you do?
Implicit Bias

- What biases came up for you?
- What biases did you notice?
- Where do our biases come from?
Origin of Bias
TEMPORAL LOBE

Stereotyping

Fear and threat

AMYGDALA

HIPPOCAMPUS

Memories/biased decision making

MEDIAL FRONTAL CORTEX

Impressions, empathy, reasoning
Representation Matters

- People form associations as children
- What does a doctor look like?
- What does a family look like?
- What does a CEO look like?
Consequences

• There are **physiological impact** of unconscious bias and significant research highlighting this reality.
  • Example, a 2014 study (on UB flash drive) conducted by the University of Maryland, UC Berkeley and Emory University revealed that African American males who experienced racial discrimination and unconscious bias showed higher rates of chronic diseases and signs of aging faster.

• Weathering Hypothesis
Implicit Bias

Implicit biases are malleable. Implicit associations can be gradually unlearned and replaced with new associations.

(Blair, 2002; Blair, Ma, & Lenton, 2001; Dasgupta, 2013; Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001; Devine, 1989; Kang, 2009; Kang & Lane, 2010; Roos, Lebrecht, Tanaka, & Tarr, 2013).
Types of Implicit Bias

- Affinity
- Halo/Horn
- Perception Bias
- Recency
- Novelty (Bizarreness effect)
- Confirmation Bias
- Conformity Bias
Affinity Bias

• The tendency to warm up or give preferences to people in our in-group, or people like us

• A tendency to see someone we feel we have something in common with, e.g., we attended the same college, hometown town/neighborhood, or similarities to someone we know and like.
Halo/Horn Bias

A tendency to evaluate someone based on a positive (halo) or negative (horn) general impression.

Note that an opposite bias of the “Halo Effect” is the “Horns Bias” where we see one bad thing about a person and let it frame our opinions of their other attributes.

- “Oh, she graduated from MSU. ...That’s a no brainer, hire her!”
- “He graduated from where?... I think we can do better than that”
Perception Bias

- A tendency to form stereotypes and assumptions about certain groups that make it impossible to make an objective judgment about members of those groups

- “Oh they’re a surgeon? They tend to be very direct and assertive”
Recency Bias

- Recency bias - giving more weight to events that are recent than those that happened further back.

- Patient Care-one patient doesn't seem as complicated as your other complicated patients.
Novelty Bias

• Being biased towards circumstances that are unique, novel, or interesting. These events may stick out as particularly attractive and result in being bias towards and individuals who can afford unique experiences.

• “Remembering the applicant that performed that juggled fire”
Confirmation Bias

- **Confirmation Bias** - a tendency to make a judgment about a person, and we subconsciously look for evidence to back up our own opinions of that person.
- The tendency to seek information that confirms pre-existing beliefs or assumptions.
Conformity Bias

- A form of groupthink where some individuals feel much of the group is leaning towards or away from a particular candidate, so they will tend to go along with the group think rather than voice their own opinions.
What Biases Come Up For You the Most in Your Settings?

*a*) Affinity  
*b*) Halo/Horn  
*c*) Perception Bias  
*d*) Recency  
*e*) Novelty (Bizarreness effect)  
*f*) Confirmation Bias  
*g*) Conformity Bias
Characteristics of Unconscious Bias

- Pervasive and Robust
- Don’t necessarily align with our declared beliefs
- We typically hold to biases that favor our own in-group
- Have real-world effects on behavior
- We can learn to control our responses to unconscious bias and not act on them
What “activates” bias?

- Under pressure for time
- Vague or ambiguous info
- Feeling fatigued
- Daily distractions

When do your biases show up?

a) Under Pressure for Time
b) Vague or Ambiguous Information/Uncertainty
c) Fatigue
d) Distracted
Interrupting Biases

Pay Attention (Awareness): To when stereotypical responses or assumptions are activated: Explore: Why am I bothered by people in that group? Why do I persist on thinking that all members of that group engage in that stereotypical behavior? An actively challenge those beliefs.

Say No: When faced with a bias that automatically comes to your mind ("I bet that slow driver is a woman, elderly...etc.", say in your head. "No!")

Time (take the time to alter behavior): To practice new strategies designed to “break” the automatic associations
Interrupting Biases

Additional strategies:

● Expose yourself to counter-stereotypical models and images
● Acknowledge these differences and work to ensure they aren’t impairing your decision-making – consciously or unconsciously
Interrupting Biases
"Press PAUSE": Examining Unconscious Bias

- Pay attention
- Acknowledge your assumptions
- Understand your perspective
- Seek different perspectives
- Examine your options and make a decision
Figure 3. Strategies to address personal bias before and after it occurs.
Mitigating Bias: A Culture of Awareness

• Acknowledge that you have biases. Everyone can have their biases, and we can combat them when we are motivated to change them. One way is to hold yourself accountable for your views.

• Note when stereotypes and assumptions are activated during a discussion and call it out to the group. Develop a healthy culture to discuss bias.

• Both on a personal and group level, practice strategies to break the automatic assumptions we make that are bias towards individuals and groups.
Mitigating Bias

Starts with Identifying:

If you have not please complete:

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html

If you have, take a different one!

(Blair, 2002; Blair, Ma, & Lenton, 2001; Dasgupta, 2013; Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001; Devine, 1989; Kang, 2009; Kang & Lane, 2010; Roos, Lebrecht, Tanaka, & Tarr, 2013).
Golden Rule versus Platinum Rule

Golden Rule: Treat people the way YOU want to be treated

Platinum Rule: Treat people the way THEY want to be treated
The Work Starts with US

• Be Brave
• Be Humble
• Be Intentional
• Be Dedicated
• Lastly, take care of yourself…this work while inspiring can be exhausting
Assistant Dean for Diversity and Cultural Initiatives

- Newly developed role
- Since April 2020
- Based in Grand Rapids

Goal: Improve the culture of diversity, equity and inclusion at CHM for medical students and faculty

- Medical student experience
  - Supportive, responsive environment

- Faculty Development - DEI
thank you