

What Lies Beneath: Implicit Bias in Healthcare

As much as we, as healthcare professionals, believe in and support the concept of equity in the care we provide, we are just as saddled with deeply embedded stereotypes as anyone else. We all carry implicit biases – learned but unconscious views about particular people. To provide better patient care and improve outcomes, we can learn to recognize and reduce our unintentional preconceptions.

This CE course is relevant to all healthcare professionals. It was originally published by Elite Learning in video format. The following transcript of the podcast has been lightly edited for length and clarity.

Episode 2 – The Impact of Implicit Bias

Research demonstrates that healthcare professionals are just as susceptible to implicit, or unconscious, bias as the general population. It also shows that implicit bias impacts the quality of patient care. An expert explains how we can overcome the biases we unintentionally carry.

Guest

Benjamin D. Reese, Jr., PsyD

- Clinical psychologist
- More than 50 years' experience working on issues of race, diversity, and implicit bias
- President and CEO of BenReese, LLC, a global diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism company
- Former Vice President for Institutional Equity and Chief Diversity Officer, Duke University and Duke University Health System

Host

Juliette Blount, MSN, ANP

- Experienced speaker and educator in the areas of racial health disparities and health equity
- Adult nurse practitioner with more than 30 years of clinical experience
- Alumna, Duke-Johnson & Johnson Nurse Leadership Program
- Community education volunteer on empowering healthcare consumers

Reviewer

Lisa Simani, APRN, MS, ACNP

- Editor, Nurse Regulatory/Compliance Planner for Elite Learning
- 20 years of publishing experience
- Lead author of peer-reviewed articles for print- and web-based nursing continuing education provider companies

Episode Key Points

Research demonstrates the effects of implicit bias in healthcare (2:43)

- National Academy of Medicine (formerly Institute of Medicine) 2003 report, “Unequal Treatment: What Healthcare Providers Need to Know About Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Healthcare” –
 - Implicit bias is among factors that influence healthcare decision making and outcomes.
 - Despite their training and commitment to treating every patient equitably, healthcare professionals carry implicit biases similar to the general population.
- Implicit bias can be exhibited by healthcare professionals in verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Healthcare professionals do not consciously intend to provide inferior care but they can internalize subtle biases that exist across American society.

Conditions that promote implicit bias (17:10)

- Time constraints (e.g., snap judgments, cutting corners, failing to take time to reflect)
- Ambiguity (e.g., discretion on ways to respond to ambiguous situations)
- Cognitive overload (e.g., fatigue, stress)
- Lack of focus (i.e., on task, the patient, etc.)

Reducing implicit bias (22:51)

- Understand the history and features of implicit bias
- Practice self-awareness (i.e., pause and reflect)
- Build structured, objective systems and protocols (to eliminate discretion)
- Provide respectful feedback to colleagues
- Create reminders within your environment to prompt recall of training suggestions

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Resources

[National Commission to Address Racism in Nursing](#)

[Institute for Healthcare Improvement: How to Reduce Implicit Bias](#)

[Project Implicit – Harvard Implicit Association Test](#)

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