

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 3 – Q&A With the Expert

Dr. Benjamin D. Reese, Jr., PsyD, returns with candid and enlightening answers to healthcare professionals' questions about implicit bias in the workplace.

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

Question: How can implicit bias be identified and if healthcare professionals overcompensate for it, does implicit bias transform into explicit bias? (2:31)

- Overcompensation for implicit bias occurs.
- Use self-reflection to recognize and mitigate overcompensation for implicit bias.
- Book recommendation for additional learning: *Blind Spots: Why We Fail to Do What's Right and What to Do About It* by Max H. Bazerman and Anne E. Tenbrunsel

Question: What is a good response if a healthcare professional experiences implicit bias? (8:35)

- Healthcare professionals are in a position of authority from the patient's perspective, which carries different responsibilities than when the professional experiences implicit bias in their personal lives.
- As a general rule, do not respond or correct patients who express implicit bias and who, with the exception of psychotherapy, do not expect modification of their behavior in interactions with healthcare professionals as part of their care.
- Recognizing that implicit and explicit bias against healthcare professionals occurs, many healthcare organizations conduct workshops or offer other support measures to help healthcare professionals respond and cope with bias in their workplaces.

Question: How should healthcare professionals handle situations in which they witness colleagues exhibiting implicit bias? (11:33)

- Provide feedback in a constructive and respectful manner.
- Create and/or support a work environment in which colleagues feel comfortable exchanging feedback.

Question: How should healthcare organizations address implicit bias in the workplace? (13:00)

- Healthcare organizations and leaders should strive to create work cultures that:
 - Recognize everyone carries unconscious biases.
 - Support self-awareness and self-reflection among colleagues.
- Support a comfortable work environment in which the giving and receiving of constructive, respectful feedback is a norm.

Question: Can you discuss in further detail the methods you use during workshops to help healthcare professionals remember what they have learned about implicit bias? (15:16)

- At the end of the workshop, select 15 to 15 words or concepts you have used to illustrate bias.
- Ask participants to circle three words that stood out to them during the workshop.
- Conduct a frequency analysis of the responses to determine the three words most likely to stimulate recall among the participant group (will vary from group to group).
- Provide a poster or other takeaway that uses the three words to stimulate the participants' recall of what they learned during the workshop and/or prompt self-reflection.

Question: Has research explored the development of implicit bias (or lack of it) in children who have been raised in multiracial, multi-ethnic, or diversely religious backgrounds? (17:25)

- Children's development of implicit bias may depend on a variety of factors, including:
 - Situations in which they've been involved

- o How their parents talk about race and biracial identity
- o Exposure in school or other settings to biracial peers
- Research by Sarah Gaither, PhD, at Duke University has shown, in general, that biracial children tend to have greater numbers of interaction with people of different races and greater facility in discussing issues surrounding race.
- More research is needed to determine if being biracial affords individuals advantages in navigating complex, diverse environments.

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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](#)