Anti-Racism in Medical Education: A Primer

This document provides answers to some frequently asked questions (FAQ) with corresponding references relevant to anti-racism in medical education. We also provide additional resources that we believe are useful for informing medical students on the broader discussions of anti-racism.

Please circulate this document widely.

If you have any feedback and/or suggestions for additional resources, please complete this Google form.

Last updated: June 12, 2020

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What is racism?

   Racism is defined as “an organized system, rooted in an ideology of inferiority that categorizes, ranks, and differentially allocates societal resources to human population groups” [1]. One paper outlines the following types of racism [2]:

   - Personally mediated racism: prejudice/discrimination between individuals
   - Internalized racism: personal acceptance of beliefs/biases that are discriminatory
   - Institutionalized racism: accepted societal norms that serve to perpetuate inequality

2. How can racism manifest in medical education?

   Racism is pervasive in medical education and manifests in several important ways, including:

   - Lack of discussions on race and racial health disparities in medical curricula [3]
   - Presentation of race as biology in mandatory medical school curriculum content, without providing social context, which may reinforce existing stereotype and promote "racial profiling" in medicine, which may lead to serious medical errors [3, 4]
   - Lack of racial representation among staff and students [6]
   - Inadequate training for medical students on how to combat racism and structural oppression [6, 7]
   - Inadequate training for educators on anti-racism and anti-oppression [2, 7]

3. What does it mean to be “anti-racist”?

   Anti-racism is defined as an "educational and organizing framework that seeks to confront, eradicate and/or ameliorate racism and privilege" [1]. Practically speaking, being "anti-racist" involves a conscious choice to educate oneself about issues of race and racism, and to actively participate in opportunities to end racial inequities.
An important distinction must be made between "anti-racism" and being "non-racist". The latter entails developing a belief system that opposes racism without necessarily taking part in collective action to dismantle racist systems. Anti-racism, on the other hand, involves a concerted effort to promote racial equity, informed by anti-racist beliefs.

4. What is “white privilege”?

White privilege refers to the unearned, built-in advantages that an individual benefits from by virtue of being white [8]. Examples of white privilege can include: seeing people of your race widely represented in the media, and moving through life without being discriminated against because of your race. It is important to note that white privilege does not discount the struggles that a white person may face during their life - instead, it acknowledges that the challenges a white person experiences tend not to be a direct result of their race.

5. What is the “hidden curriculum” and does it apply to racism?

The hidden curriculum involves the informal, and often subtle, teachings in medical education that result in a perceptual change in students' behaviours, beliefs and practices [9]. In the setting of racism, this may materialize as either the presence or absence of knowledge or ideas that discriminate against one or more groups. For example, one medical student wrote that her curriculum content emphasized the appearance of syphilis on black skin, and the appearance of psoriasis on white skin [10].

6. What can medical students do to be anti-racist?

As discussed in a paper on anti-racism in New Zealand [1], there are five approaches that can applied to tackle racial inequity:

A. Reflexive relational practice: take time to listen and respect in order to understand the issues at play
B. Socio-political education: learn about the historical context shaping the curriculum, analyze the structural inequities present, and integrate new strategies to address them
C. Structural power analysis: determine what policies help promote racism and replace them with anti-racist ones
D. Systems change: engage all levels of the medical education system, starting from student groups up until leadership at the faculty level and above
E. Monitoring and evaluation: ensure accountability for the strategies that are put in place by tracking progress

Another paper provides four points of agreement for ensuring that educators can effectively engage in dialogues about race [2]:

1. Stay engaged
2. Speak your truth
3. Experience discomfort
4. Expect and accept non-closure
References


### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

#### Academic articles


#### Online articles


#### Books


How to Be an Antiracist. Kendi, Ibram X. Vintage. 2020

#### Online Workshops

2. “Intercultural Awareness Certificate” by Queen’s University
https://quic.queensu.ca/get-involved/intercultural-training/#schedule
(Note this program has been postponed until further notice)

3. Equal Treatment modules on race in medicine
https://equalrx.org/

Collected Resources

Anti-racism resources
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BRlF2_zhNe86SGgHa6-VIBO-QgirlTwCTugSfKie5Fs/preview?pru=AAABco-jmqk*5Bo9DaanZy8pou5q4L7g2A

Starts with one
https://swocanada.org/blackstudentsmatter

Anti-racism reading calendar:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1H-Vxs6jEUByXyIMS2BjGH1kQ7mEuZnHpPSs1Bpaqmw0/preview?fbclid=IwAR1G-PZK4EjjKldX8ToHW1hCJ2V8NBGmpUWdYHFf3YxOvFXWO64z5rvCmq&pru=AAABcp6_FE0*m_q4qX-4seY-7adXVTHV-Q