

## **MCS Selective**

### **Treated Differently: Bias, Disparities and the Practice of Medicine**

#### **Introduction**

*Of all forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and inhumane.*

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 1966

Implicit bias is defined as that which “affects our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.” Unconscious bias is ubiquitous and has an impact on decision-making and on the quality of healthcare provided to patients despite the altruistic intentions of physicians. Beyond the evidence that healthcare disparities are related to socioeconomic factors, access to health insurance, and other factors, healthcare disparities have also been shown to be caused by implicit bias. What we are not aware of consciously proves difficult to change. In the world of medicine, these unknowing biases may perpetuate the currently documented healthcare disparities.

Exploring the evolutionary development of implicit bias and understanding the neuroscience of bias will shed light on the nature of implicit bias. Experienced across multiple areas in medicine, such as in the treatment of pain, asthma, and hypertension, understanding the causes of implicit bias will increase awareness of the impact it has on patient care and pave the way forward toward the common goal of equal healthcare for all. The selective is divided into three areas: the nature of implicit bias, the impact implicit bias has on healthcare disparities, and the strategies we can use to lessen the impact of implicit bias on these disparities. These goals are accomplished through the use of the Implicit Association Test (IAT), targeted readings, and class discussion.

#### **Instructors**

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#### **Educational Objectives:**

At the conclusion of this selective you will have the ability to:

- 1 Understand the nature of implicit bias, the role of classification, and stereotyping from both an evolutionary standpoint and the neuroscience behind these concepts
- 2 Identify the difference between implicit and explicit bias
- 3 Examine your own biases and how they may impact your practice
- 4 Identify current healthcare disparities and the impact of implicit bias on patient care
- 5 Identify how to lessen the role of implicit bias on patient treatment and outcomes.

**Last updated on: 6/2/2017**

### Requirements and Outline:

1. Attendance at all four sessions is required.
2. Students participate in class discussions.
3. Each student will facilitate an approximately 10 minute discussion in class about an article of their choice related to an individual topic of interest about bias and/or health care disparity.
4. Each student will write a short reflection, (2-3 pages) about a personal perspective/experience related to implicit bias. Specifically how the class discussions and readings have impacted your views and future practice in medicine.

#### Session I

What is meant by implicit bias? Is implicit bias inherent in us all? Identify the meanings of implicit versus explicit bias, stereotypes and prejudice. How does evolution affect stereotyping and classification and what is the neuroscience of bias? The Implicit Association Test (IAT) developed in the mid-1990's analyzes the role of automatic association underlying implicit bias. Familiarize yourself with the IAT (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>) to discuss in class.

#### Session II

In this session we will discuss the healthcare disparities that exist in current medical treatment and how implicit bias plays a role in perpetuating these disparities.

#### Session III

This session will focus on interventions to reduce the effects of implicit bias in healthcare with the primary focus on the individual provider. Increased awareness of the causes and impact of implicit bias can improve patient outcomes. A multi-pronged approach may lessen the hold implicit bias has on health disparity through providing motivation to change and techniques to improve patient-provider communication and relationships.

#### Session IV

Students will present a short review of an article of interest related to the class discussions.

### Class Size

Minimum 6 Maximum 10

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