Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

A Decade of Studying Implicit Racial/Ethnic Bias in Healthcare Providers Using the Implicit Association Test

Visit Article

ABSTRACT: Disparities in the care and outcomes of US racial/ethnic minorities are well documented. Research suggests that provider bias plays a role in these disparities. The implicit association test enables measurement of implicit bias via tests of automatic associations between concepts. Hundreds of studies have examined implicit bias in various settings, but relatively few have been conducted in healthcare. The aim of this systematic review is to synthesize the current knowledge on the role of implicit bias in healthcare disparities. A comprehensive literature search of several databases between May 2015 and September 2016 identified 37 qualifying studies. Of these, 31 found evidence of pro-White or light-skin/anti-Black, Hispanic, American Indian or dark-skin bias among a variety of HCPs across multiple levels of training and disciplines.

Fourteen studies examined the association between implicit bias and healthcare outcomes using clinical vignettes or simulated patients. Eight found no statistically significant association between implicit bias and patient care while six studies found that higher implicit bias was associated with disparities in treatment recommendations, expectations of therapeutic bonds, pain management, and empathy. All seven studies that examined the impact of implicit provider bias on real-world patient-provider interaction found that providers with stronger implicit bias demonstrated poorer patient-provider communication. Two studies examined the effect of implicit bias on real-world clinical outcomes. One found an association and the other did not. Two studies tested interventions aimed at reducing bias, but only one found a post-intervention reduction in implicit bias. This review reveals a need for more research exploring implicit bias in real-world patient care, potential modifiers and confounders of the effect of implicit bias on care, and strategies aimed at reducing implicit bias and improving patient-provider communication. Future studies have the opportunity to build on this current body of research, and in doing so will enable us to achieve equity in healthcare and outcomes.

Journal:

Social Science and Medicine
Authors: Tiffani Johnson, Tanisha Belton

Related Content

- Examining Physician Implicit Racial Bias Against Children
  Research at a Glance
  Apr 2017
- Implicit Bias in Pediatric Academic Medicine
  Article

Apr 2017

- Comparison of Physician Implicit Racial Bias Toward Adults Versus Children
  Article
  Dec 2016