ADDRESSING BIAS AND MICROAGGRESSIONS IN THE CLINICAL ENVIRONMENT

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Group Norms

- Assume positive intent
- Listen to each other with respect & an open mind
- Speak respectfully
- Maintain confidentiality
- Embrace discomfort
By the end of this talk, you should be able to:

– Define forms and themes of microaggressions
– Illustrate impact of microaggressions in the learning environment
– Describe at least 2 frameworks for interrupting microaggressions in the clinical learning environment
• Brief, commonplace statement, action or incidence
• Often indirect, subtle or unintentional
• Communicate hostile, derogatory or negative views against members of a marginalized group
• Microaggressions and other forms of racism/bias are rooted (in part) in:
  – Power differentials
  – (In)direct assertion of power
### The ADDRESSING Framework: A model of cultural influences and their relationship to the social construct of power
- Dr. Pamela Hayes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Characteristic</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Less Power</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age and Generational Influences</td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Children, Adolescents, Elders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Disability</td>
<td>Temporarily Able-Bodied</td>
<td>Individuals with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Acquired Later in Life</td>
<td>Temporarily Able-Bodied</td>
<td>Individuals with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion and Spiritual Orientation</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Non-Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity/Race Identity</td>
<td>White or Caucasian</td>
<td>Persons of Color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Status</td>
<td>Upper and Middle Class (Access to Higher Education)</td>
<td>Lower status due to occupation, education, income, rural habitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Heterosexuals</td>
<td>Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Heritage</td>
<td>Non-Native</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Origin</td>
<td>U.S. Born</td>
<td>Immigrants, refugees, International students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Women, Transgender, Intersex</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Targets

- People who are objects of prejudice, discrimination

Allies

- People who belong to groups in power who support those in less power; work to eradicate prejudice, discrimination

Bystanders

- Individuals with a superficial or nebulous awareness of racially biased behaviors and institutional policies/practices
Three categories of microaggressions

**Microassaults (Often conscious)**
- “Old fashioned” racism

**Microinsults (Often unconscious)**
- Communications (including non-verbal) that convey rudeness, insensitivity

**Microinvalidation (Often unconscious)**
- Communications that exclude, negate thoughts, feelings, or experiences
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Microaggression</th>
<th>Message (Metacommunication)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alien in their own land</td>
<td>“You speak good English”</td>
<td>You are not American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascription of Intelligence</td>
<td>“You are so articulate”</td>
<td>It’s unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorblindness</td>
<td>“When I look at you, I don’t see color”</td>
<td>Denies a person of color’s racial/ethnic experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denial of Individualized Racism</td>
<td>“My best friend is Asian”</td>
<td>I’m immune because I have friends of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>TV Shows/movies without representation of POC</td>
<td>Your people are not important and don’t exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>“Smile, you’re too pretty for people not to see you smile”</td>
<td>Your appearance defines what people think of you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>“You don’t look Jewish”</td>
<td>All Jewish people look the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>“I like you but why do others have to shove it in our face?”</td>
<td>The LGBTQ experience is offensive and abnormal</td>
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The impact of microaggressions on learners

• Well-being and burn-out
• Negotiating professional development while being othered
• Harsh learning climate
  – Negatively affect learning, performance, wellness
• Linked to development of
  – Anxiety
  – Depression
  – Hypertension

Osseo-Asare et al; Molina et al, 2020
“You are so articulate.”

Exercise #1: Reframe microaggressions

- What is the statement’s intent?
- How might this be interpreted by the recipient?
- How can we reframe the statement to match its intent?
RESPONDING TO MICROAGGRESSIONS
Guiding principals

• Challenging to do without frameworks or practice

• Targets may not always want an ally/bystander to respond

• Tips
  – Pick your battles
  – Pick when and where to address the offender
  – Adjust response (confront versus educate)
Assess the challenges

- Power/hierarchy dynamic
  - Training hierarchy
  - Patient versus provider

- In group setting (i.e., on rounds), better to respond later

- The onus falling on the microaggressed → assess your energy
<table>
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<th>Framework</th>
<th>Setup</th>
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<td>X, Y, Z</td>
<td>I feel X when Y because Z....</td>
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| **Open The Front Door** | **Observe**: Make concrete, objective statement about microaggression  
**Think**: State your thoughts based upon the observation  
**Feel**: State your emotion  
**Desired outcome**: State your desired outcome |

Adapted from Sue et al, 2019; Molina et al, 2020
A transgender patient is admitted to acute care ward for pneumonia with a large effusion. As the primary team rounds, a consultant service interrupts rounds. The consulting fellow misgenders the patient. When the primary attending corrects the fellow, the fellow becomes exasperated and says “Ugh, just yet another PC thing that I’m getting criticized for....”
Observe: “Hey Dr. Russell, remember yesterday in the team meeting when you use misgendered our mutual patient and sighed when I corrected you.”

Think: “Your dismissal of our patient’s wishes made me think that our hospital does not value the diversity of our patient population.”

Feelings: “I wanted to share with you that I left that conversation feeling upset.”

Desired outcome: “I would like you to be aware of how reactions like that can have a negative impact even though that was probably not your intent.”
### Frameworks

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| **ACTION**                | **Ask clarifying questions**  
                          | **Curiosity:** Come from curiosity, not judgement  
                          | **Tell:** State your observations in an objective manner  
                          | **Impact exploration:** Ask/state potential effect microaggression has on others  
                          | **Own your own thoughts/feelings**  
                          | **Next steps:** Request appropriate action to be taken |
| **“Micro” intervention**  | **Make the “invisible” visible**  
                          | **Disarm the microaggression**  
                          | **Educate the offender**  
                          | **Seek external reinforcement or support, if needed** |

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• **Make “invisible” visible:** “Dr. Russell, when you mention having to be politically correct when I pointed out your misgendering of our patient, it suggests that the trans experience is abnormal.”

• **Disarm the microaggression:** “I disagree that it is ‘PC’ to address our patients as they request. At our hospital, all patients deserve the right to be addressed in a respectful manner.”

• **Educate the offender:** “Transgender people often experience misgendering, which impacts their health.”

• **See external support:** “I’d be happy to provide additional resources about this topic or arrange for a talk from our DEI office.”
• Debrief with those involved outside the room

• Acknowledge the event and everyone’s discomfort:
  – “When I heard X, it made me feel uncomfortable.”
  – “How did others feel during that encounter?”
• Microaggressions based upon differences in power

• Pick one or two frameworks to use consistently to respond to microaggressions

• Practice responding to microaggressions before having to do so in a clinical encounter
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