Investigating the Need for Implicit Bias Training on a Labor and Delivery Unit
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**Background**
- The U.S. is the only industrialized nation where the maternal mortality rate has been on a growth trajectory since 2000
- U.S. Black women are 3-4x more likely to die from birth complications than White women, regardless of education or socioeconomic status
- Implicit bias (unconscious attitudes/stereotypes affecting understanding, actions, decisions) is a contributing factor to this health disparity
- No implicit bias training currently exists within the labor and delivery unit of a large, urban medical center

**Purpose**
- To examine implicit bias among healthcare providers working on a labor and delivery unit
- To determine provider interest in implicit bias training

**Theoretical Model**
Theory of Culture Care and Universality
- Delivers culturally congruent care to meet diverse needs of patients
- Identifies external forces such as implicit bias that negatively impact health outcomes

**Methods**

**Steps to Administering the IAT**

1. Light skin appears in the left corner of the screen and dark skin in the right corner. Quickly assign positive and negative evaluations to images of various skin tones that rapidly appear in the center screen by pressing one key for dark and another key for light.

2. "Bad" appears in the left corner and "good" appears in the right corner. Quickly sort words that appear in the center into each category (e.g., Happy, Pleading, Joyful, Terrific, Selfish, Othersome, Rotten, Evil)

3. The left corner is assigned the "bad" category/light-skinned images while the right corner is assigned the "good" category/dark-skinned images. Continue to quickly assign the images and words that appear in the center to each category.

4. The good and bad categories are switched to light-skin/good in the left corner and dark-skin/bad in the right corner.

**Scoring the IAT**
- Scored by an algorithm using the speed that concepts and evaluations are sorted in the first versus the second skin-tone comparisons
- The degree of implicit bias is measured by the strength of association of items to skin tone and the speed the test-taker assigns items
- If the score shows a preference for dark skin, test-taker assigned:
  - Positive items faster to images of dark skin-tone
  - Negative items faster to images of light skin-tone
- Scored on a seven-point scale from strong automatic preference for light skin tone to strong automatic preference for dark skin tone

**Supplemental Survey**
- Provider occupation (physician or nurse)
  - Surprised by my IAT score (yes/no)
  - Implicit bias could impact clinical decision-making (yes/no)
  - Providers would benefit from implicit bias training (yes/no)

**Procedures**
- An email flyer introducing the study was sent to all nurse and physician providers with a link to the survey in REDCap
- The REDCap survey included a link to the Skin Tone IAT website
- Weekly email reminders were sent for 3 weeks to non-responders
- Providers were also introduced to the study in person during shift change 6 times over 4 weeks
- Provided the flyer with a QR code to access the REDCap survey
  - Given pens as an incentive to participate
  - At completion of the Skin Tone IAT measure, participants were given their score and asked to place it in the REDCap survey
- After the survey, a harm mitigation statement was included with a link to implicit bias resource <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/faqs.html>
- Survey was open for 4 weeks from June 21 through July 18, 2021
- No implicit bias training currently exists within the labor and delivery unit of a large, urban medical center

**Results**
- 17 providers (10 nurses, 7 physicians) participated in the survey
- Implicit bias could impact clinical decision-making (yes/no)
- 69% of participants' IAT score indicated an automatic preference (bias) for light skin

**Conclusions**
- Findings show existence of implicit bias with the majority of participants reporting a preference for light skin
- Implicit biases must be addressed to better provide culturally congruent, equitable, maternal health care
- Next steps include examining the patient experience with person-centered care during childbirth
- Recommendation: using a restorative justice framework to develop and implement unit-specific implicit bias training that is informed by input from stakeholders and community members

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