Unconscious Bias in Faculty Recruitment: Relevance to Radiology

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College of Medicine
HealthCare
The Power of Advanced Medicine
Disclosure

In February 2016, I completed a 2-day Cook Ross train-the-trainer course and have conducted a dozen or so Unconscious Bias workshops for College of Medicine chairs, center directors, and faculty.
Learning Objectives

• Define Unconscious Bias (UB)
• Understand relationship to diversity & inclusion
• Develop strategies to mitigate inherent individual & organizational biases that impact search process
• Apply strategies to recruit best faculty into Radiology
Diversity

• Important to all organizations
• Fosters creativity & innovation
• Promotes adaptability for change
• Reflects student body, patient population, community at large
• By managing UB, develop strategies to promote/support diversity/inclusion & empower search process to recruit best talent
  – “Different lures attract different fish”
2016 ACR Survey Results:
Gender Distribution of Workforce

- No significant changes from 2015
- Courtesy of Edward Bluth, MD, Chair, ACR Commission on Human Resources
Radiology Pipeline: Diversity-Challenged

Lightfoote et al, JACR, 2014
The Movie Theater
Introduction to Unconscious Bias (UB)

- Your reaction? Leave or sit down?
- Psychosocial demonstration of UB
- Philanthropic motorcycle club of doctors, lawyers, businessmen, judges, etc.
- By understanding & managing UB, open up larger pool of potential talent for recruitment
Definition: Conscious (Explicit) Bias

- Perceptions about individual/group on conscious level
  - Preference for working with younger vs. older, men vs. women
  - Sense threat => racial/ethnic profiling
- Fully aware, in control
- Knowingly conceal for social/political correctness
Definition: Implicit (Unconscious) Bias

- Pervasive tendency/inclination deeply rooted in unconscious feelings/attitudes/assumptions (stereotypes) about groups of people (race, age, ethnicity, appearance) developed over lifetime (personal experiences, media)
- Influences decisions/actions automatically/unconsciously, w/o awareness/intent/questioning
- Associations => response ("gut reaction")
- Favoring/valuing one group over another
  - Eastern KY/Appalachia: regional accent/where from
Biases: Both Favorable & Unfavorable

• Examples of MEO’s:
  – Neg: Men who wear white socks with business attire
  – Pos: Non-smokers, no piercings, no (visible) tattoos
  – Neg: Construction workers (taunted F college students)
  – Pos: Equestrians (youngest daughter)
  – Neg: Names (bully, obnoxious/disruptive faculty)
  – Pos: Names (family member, friend, own name!)

– YOUR EXAMPLES? Be honest....
Bias: Effect on Employability/Earnings

- Randomized, double-blind study of 127 M & F science faculty from research-intensive universities rated same application of student applying for laboratory manager position --- catch: M vs F name
- “John” rated 4/7; “Jennifer” as 3.3/7
- Salary to “John,” $30,328; to “Jennifer,” $26,508
- “John” more favorably as one to hire for laboratory/mentee
- “Jennifer” less competent, less likely hired
- Female professors as biased as male professors!

Dr. Jo Handelsman, Yale University, 2012
Gender Bias: Other Examples

- Letters for F faculty focused on personal attributes, less respectful (first name!); more objective for M, focused on achievements, more respectful ("Dr.")
- Mothers = warmth w/o competence; fathers = warmth w/ competence
- M = science; F = social sciences
- Names: "Karen" vs "Lakisha"
- F less likely to be asked to serve as committee chair/section head/department chair or be involved in decisions re: promotion, space allocation

AAMC, 2010
Cognitive Science

• Brain bombarded constantly
• Processes many inputs (people, situations, known vs. unknown)
• “Fast brain” + “slow brain”
• Both “brains” necessary for survival in complex world
Fast (Emotional) Brain

- Survival instincts, rapid associations, emotional responses, flight/fight/freeze, M/F, friend/foe
- Comfort zone, personal experiences throughout life, conditioned reflexes
- “Gut reactions” ⇒ decisions without thoughtful or deliberate consideration, “just do it”
- Example:
  - CV from top school ⇒ let’s interview, but CV from “lesser” school, let’s move on ...
Slow (Thinking) Brain

• Regulates body, balances emotions, calms fears
• Morality, language, consciousness, rationality
• Reasoning & insight
• Fairness, inclusivity
• Intentionally selective, not reactive
• Counterbalances “fast” brain
• Example:
  – CV from lesser school might be superstar!
The Photograph

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-TyPfYMDK8
Projection: “Fast” Brain in Action

- Reactions to video? If you were photographer?
- Project association from something/someone reminding of past experience
- Draw on association to make rapid decision/judgement, negative or positive
- Example:
  - Phone = talking, texting, games
  - Medical student or resident “on phone”
    - Neg: goofing off
    - Pos: informational/learning tool
Strategies to Mitigate UB

• Realize biases inherent in all humans

• Transform culture:
  – Slow down & focus to reduce “fast brain”
  – Bring to light deeply-seated biases
  – Systematically de-bias (brain can unlearn)
  – Create initiatives to mitigate practices
1st Step to Reduce Bias in Recruitment

Pre-training:

• UB program/readings
• Foundation for self-awareness, intentional & transparent team-building

WARNING:
Quite revealing, may be disturbing

Anyone can take the test online. Worth it: implicit.harvard.edu.
2nd Step to Reduce Bias in Recruitment

Design framework for desired outcome:
• Construct list of qualifications of ideal candidate w/ alternative criteria (if needed)
• Stay on course/protect against “bias creep”

The CV:
• Name --- blind?
• Education & training
• Work history
• Scholarly record (researcher vs. educator?)
3rd Step to Reduce Bias in Recruitment

Number of minority & underrepresented candidates:
- Ample representation on committee and candidates
- Agree to preferred target goal for # minority applicants to review to guarantee fair process
- If fail to achieve, agree sufficient efforts expended

The Interview Day:
- When does day start and end? (travel fatigue)
- Lecture (Example: audience asking questions, candidate “stop interrupting”)
- Who meeting with during day? Dinner?
4th Step to Reduce Bias in Recruitment

Table placement & seating design:

- Alternate seating arrangements to hinder formation of unconscious power alliances, influence proceedings and decision-making dynamics

The Committee:

- Mix of opinions
- Biases about clinical skills or research direction
- Introvert vs. extrovert, interpret in different ways
- Avoid “good fit” = bias to keep department/organization as is
5th Step to Reduce Bias in Recruitment

Impartial scribe usage:

- Words and phrases easily and variably interpreted based on preexisting bias
- Need reliable record to clarify statements expressed or issues dealt with during deliberations
Summary: UB in Radiology

• UB is easy to talk about, but challenging to manage.
• We must acknowledge that UB exists in each of us, recognize and accept it, and apply de-biasing strategies intentionally and systematically in recruitment process.
• Mastering UB matters greatly to our advancement to diverse and inclusive work culture.
Recommended Readings


These articles contain additional sources that I also found useful in preparing this talk.