How Racism is a Barrier to Learning in Residency: Lessons from a Case Study

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Je n’ai aucune affiliation (financière ou autre) avec une entreprise pharmaceutique, un fabricant d’appareils médicaux ou un cabinet de communication.
Introduction

• Overt racism in healthcare is shocking when it occurs
• Increasing awareness of these situations and providing staff with tools to deal with challenging situations is crucial to maintaining a positive learning environment
• “The function, the very serious function of racism, is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work.” – T. Morrison
Purpose

This goal of this study was to explore HOW racism can interfere with learning in residency.
Methods

- Qualitative descriptive single case study design (Baxter & Jack, 2008)
- Conceptual Lens: Sociocultural Learning Theory
- Context: Internal Medicine
- 4 participants (2 faculty, 2 residents)
- Data Sources: Observations completed by faculty member and guided reflections, rounds presentation and discussion
- Data analyzed using an emergent thematic approach (Patton 2016)
Case

• Team of attending physician (WOC) and residents (POC) on Internal Medicine clinical teaching unit

• Patient is an unwell 65 year old woman with admission for respiratory distress

• Patient’s daughter uses racial slur in speaking about resident and tells nurse that no doctors are wanted in the room
1. How do you feel that racism could interfere in residency education?

2. What effect could racism have on your participation, or participation of learners in residency education?

3. What effect could racism have on the learning environment in residency education?
4. What effect could racism have on the **content** being taught and learned in residency education?

5. What effect could racism have on the **community** of teachers (or learners) in residency education?

6. What effect could racism have on the **professional identity** of teachers (or learners) in residency education?
Overall Findings

• Racism interferes with all aspects of sociocultural learning with an effect on resident well being, further
• Participation: exclusion, superficial, and deep
• Context: can be unsafe for learners
• Content: not inconsequential
• Community: stress, possibly mitigated by diverse workforce
• Professional Identity: inferiority felt by residents
Conclusion

- Although all aspects of sociocultural learning are affected by racism, the most profound effect is on the LEARNER.
- Residents must be supported and awareness though well-intentioned is not enough.
Conclusion

• Clinical teachers must be prepared to support and guide residents through incidents of racism
• **Action item for program directors:** Look at your cohort of residents and engage them, asking if they need support
• As has been brought up already, create dialogue – it is time.
I would like to thank all residents who participated in this study.

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