A Workshop on Microaggressions & Allyship for the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

February 15, 2021

Social Accountability & Community Engagement Office
Indigenous Health Professions Program
Equity Team OPVPA
Today's Agenda

- Introduction
- Presentation on Indigenous History & Context
- Presentation on Allyship & Microaggressions
- Break
- Breakout Sessions: Case Studies
- Debrief
- Wrap Up & Resources
We are here in Tio’ťia:ke (Montreal) on the unceded territory of the Kanien’kehá:ka. The Kanien’kehá:ka, also known as the Keepers of the Eastern Door, are one of the nations that make up the Haudenosaunee Confederacy here on Turtle Island (North America). The two closest Indigenous communities are Kahnawake and Kanesatá:ke.

Learn more about the land you are on and have been on here: http://native-land.ca/ and commit to supporting Indigenous resistance and thrival.
Wow, your English is incredible...! Oh, thanks. Your English is incredible too...

Well of course, I was born here...  So was I...
Defining Microaggressions

• Coined by a Black, Harvard University psychiatrist, Chester Pierce, in the 1970s to describe seemingly minor but damaging put-downs and indignities experiences by African Americans

• Derald Wing Sue, Chinese professor of counselling psychology at Colombia University, expanded the term to cover:
  • brief and commonplace
  • verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities
  • intentional or unintentional
  • communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group
MICROAGGRESSIVE GREETING CARDS
(ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER EDITION)

1. You must get A's all the time!
2. You all look the same.
3. You are so exotic.
4. Your English is great!
5. Where are you really from?
6. You're the #1 model minority.
Forms of Microaggressions

• Verbal
  • "I don't believe in race"
  • "You only got the admission/scholarship/award/promotion because you're Asian"
  • Repeatedly misgendering a patient/student/coworker/peer

• Behavioural
  • Denying medication to a Black female patient because you assume she is exaggerating her pain
  • Dismissing a fat* patient's concerns by immediately linking them to their weight
  • Talking slowly to a deaf or an autistic patient/student/coworker/peer

• Environmental
  • Your curricula devalues Indigenous perspectives of health and wellness
  • Having only gendered washrooms
  • Your building/office is not accessible

*reclaimed term as a neutral, non-medical, physical descriptor of body size
Types of Microaggressions

• Microassaults
  • Intentionally behaving in a discriminatory way without intending to be offensive
  • i.e. using language like "gay", "crazy", "bipolar", "handicapped" or as a "joke"; telling a student with a disability "you can't handle med school"

• Microinsults
  • More subtle yet still harmful comments/actions that are unintentionally discriminatory
  • i.e. "they only got the job because they checked all the diversity boxes"; "wow you are so articulate"; "your afro/dreads/braids are unprofessional"

• Microinvalidations
  • Denying or undermining the experiences of a certain group of people
  • i.e. "you're exaggerating"; "they were being too sensitive"; "being 'triggered' isn't real"; "it's not about race"; "I don't see colour";
The Impacts of Microaggressions on Health

- Research conducted on people of color has found that they experience subtle racism as more difficult to deal with than traditional racism (Dovidio and Gaertner, 1998; Salvatore and Shelton, 2007; https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01995/full)
- Center for Health Journalism
  - Researchers at Columbia University have found that the experience of racism can result in traumatic stress. This stress is linked to negative mental health outcomes, such as depression, anger, physical reactions, avoidance, intrusion, hypervigilance, and low self-esteem.
  - One recent study showed that Native Americans diagnosed with type 2 diabetes experienced racial microaggressions from their health care providers. Among those sampled in the study, a correlation was found between microaggressions and self-reported histories of heart attack, depressive symptoms, and prior-year hospitalization.
  - Data show that perception of racial discrimination is associated with reduced trust in physicians as well as reduced adherence to medication among African-American adults suffering from chronic disease. Lack of trust in providers due to discrimination is also related to lower levels of cancer screening among lower-income and African-American adults.
  - "Systemic anti-black racism is making us sick, both mentally and physically as black people; resistance to anti-black racism can contribute to wellbeing; and we must value Afro-centric approaches and perspectives, values and practices, in order to improve health and wellness." - Dr. Onye Nnorom
Break!
Case Studies - 30 min

1. Join your breakout room (facilitators will be placed in each room)
2. Discuss the first case scenario
3. Discuss the second case scenario
Breakout Room Ground Rules

- Acknowledge
- No Blame
- Respect
- Individual Experience
- Share the Air
- Not Experts
- Ask for Help
Strategies

What to do when you witness it or when someone discloses this to you?

How to prevent saying it?

What to do when you say it?

What to do when you are targeted?
Strategies

• When you witness it
  • Adress the person who said it: "I used to say that too until I learned it can give off the message that..."
  • Check in with the person who was the target afterwards

• When someone discloses
  • Ask what they need (someone to listen; support to report to HR, etc)
  • Don’t make promises you can't keep

What to do when you witness it or when someone discloses this to you?
Strategies

• Pause before making personal comments
• Learn about your own biases
  • Ask someone to hold you accountable (not an underrepresented person)
  • Take Harvard's Implicit Association Test
  • Clock your body responses to certain people/situations (are you more defensive or annoyed by certain people?)
• Diversity your professional, social and online networks
• Educate yourself with workshops, articles, books and podcasts
• Practice micro-inclusions

How to prevent saying it?
Strategies

• Apologize
  • Even if it was a "joke"
  • Even if you didn’t intend to offend and feel defensive
  • Even if no one challenges you on it

• Know that the person may not want to talk about it or explain to you why the message was hurtful – you can do the research without involving them

• Develop your awareness of biases and discrimination

• Be open to feedback

What to do when you say it?
Strategies

- Respond now, later or never
- Use humour to call it to attention
- Use scripting
- Use the R.A.V.E.N. approach by J. Luke Wood and Frank Harris III:
  1. Redirect the conversation
  2. Ask probing questions
  3. Value clarification
  4. Emphasize your own thoughts
  5. Next steps

What to do when you are targeted?
R.A.V.E.N. Approach to Addressing Microaggressions
by J. Luke Wood & Frank Harris III

• REDIRECT (intervene)(correct)(pull aside)
• ASK probing questions for clarity
  • “I think I heard you say... what did you mean by that?”
  • “I want to make sure I understand what you were saying, were you saying that...?”
• VALUES clarification
  • You know, in this department, we work hard to create a space that is safe and welcoming for all students.
  • “What you just said is not in alignment or consistent with our institutional values that prioritize equity and inclusion.”
• EMPHASIZE your own thoughts and feelings
  • “When I hear your comment, I think/feel…”
  • “Many people might take that to mean…”
  • “In my experience…”
• NEXT steps
  • “The next time you encounter this situation, you may want to consider doing…”

Photo by Casey Horner on Unsplash
Resources on Microaggressions

- Disability Microaggressions – Ableist Things People Say by Sheri Bryne-Haber
- How to Respond to Racial Microaggressions when They Occur by Diverse Issues in Higher Education
- Microaggression and Allyship Campaign: #UofTMedCARES by University of Toronto
- Tool: Recognizing Microaggressions and the Messages They Send by University of California
- Turn Microaggressions into Micro-Inclusions by eLearning Industry