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## Journal of the National Medical Association

Volume 109, Issue 3, Autumn 2017, Pages 156-163

Original Article

## Implicit Bias in Pediatric Academic Medicine

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## Abstract

## Objective

Despite known benefits of diversity, certain racial/ethnic groups remain underrepresented in academic pediatrics. Little research exists regarding unconscious racial attitudes among pediatric faculty responsible for decisions on workforce recruitment and retention in academia. This study sought to describe levels of unconscious racial bias and perceived barriers to minority recruitment and retention among academic pediatric faculty leaders.

## Methods

Authors measured unconscious racial bias in a sample of pediatric faculty attending diversity workshops conducted at local and national meetings in 2015. A paper version of the validated Implicit Association Test (IAT) measured unconscious racial bias. Subjects also reported perceptions about minority recruitment and retention.

## Results

Of 68 eligible subjects approached, 58 (85%) consented and completed the survey with IAT. Of participants, 83% had leadership roles and 93% were involved in recruitment. Participants had slight pro-white/anti-black bias on the IAT ( $M = 0.28$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ). There were similar IAT scores among participants in leadership roles ( $M = 0.33$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ) and involved in recruitment ( $M = 0.28$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ). Results did not differ when comparing participants in local workshops to the national workshop ( $n = 36$ ,  $M = 0.29$ ,  $SD = 0.40$  and  $n = 22$ ,  $M = 0.27$ ,  $SD = 0.49$  respectively;  $p = 0.88$ ). Perceived barriers to minority recruitment and retention included lack of minority mentors, poor recruitment efforts, and lack of qualified candidates.

## Conclusions

Unconscious pro-white/anti-black racial bias was identified in this sample of academic pediatric faculty and leaders. Further research is needed to examine how unconscious bias impacts decisions in academic pediatric workforce recruitment. Addressing unconscious bias and perceived barriers to minority recruitment and retention represent opportunities to improve diversity efforts.

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## Keywords

Diversity; Racial bias; Implicit bias

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Funding/Support: This research was supported by the National Institutes of Health through grants [K12 HL109009](#) awarded to Dr. Johnson and [K24AR055259](#) awarded to Dr. Ibrahim. This research was also supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development program through grant [72430](#) awarded to Dr. Johnson. The sponsoring agencies had no role in the design and conduct of the study; in the collection, management, analysis, and interpretation of the data; or in the preparation, review, or approval of the manuscript. The content of this article is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the sponsoring agencies.

Ethical approval: This study was reviewed and determined exempt by Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's Committees for the Protection of Human Subjects on March 31, 2015 (IRB 15-011866).

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