



Evidence-Based Strategies to Promote Health Equity for All

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Progress - forward movement in a perceived, positive direction - is often marked by relief at overcoming the challenges and obstacles encountered when advocating for change. All things considered, most people can identify some positive outcomes and experiences in their past. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) practitioners and allies have some wins as well; namely, bringing forward issues and seeking solutions. Nevertheless, some organizations and individuals have intensified their opposition to DEIB initiatives, asserting these efforts are themselves racist, immoral, and illegal (Ellis & Thorbecke, 2024). The stance that DEIB has nefarious intentions is inaccurate for practitioners, allies, and organizations that are earnestly striving to create a more inclusive world. This article addresses common misconceptions regarding DEIB and offers evidence-based practical strategies to stay engaged, advocate for change, and drive positive outcomes for the patients and populations served by ambulatory care nurses across settings.

Concerns and Opposition

Efforts to debunk DEIB as credible and worthy of attention may distract ambulatory care nurses and healthcare providers in general from acknowledging that holistic care involves attending to all facets of humanity, including

background, culture, race, belief system, and everything that makes a person who they are and how they identify (Chekmeyan & DeBenedictis, 2023). "Debates about diversity compete awkwardly with debates about immigration, same-sex marriage, environmental justice, poverty, globalization and global conflict - all viewed as separate, unrelated issues despite their connectedness within a multicultural context" (Butler, 2014, p. 4).

Dr. Johnnella Butler's (2014) words summarize a major misconception about DEIB and the work that goes into creating a diverse and inclusive environment. Competition over which demographic, social cause, or current global event requires the greatest attention is counterproductive to organizational success and the health of the global community. DEIB is interconnected with all these issues, and attention to DEIB benefits everyone.

Practical Organizational Strategies

The first step toward an inclusive environment is to know your starting point. One method that is low-cost and requires minimal labor to implement is surveying the people in your organization. Conducting a survey is not a complicated task and is one of the most practical strategies that can be implemented, with one caveat. Organizations just beginning their DEIB

journey may need to spend more time in the planning phase to garner support from colleagues and leaders in the organization. An example of a survey implementation strategy was published by Regis and colleagues (2023) and is a resource on how to collect and report survey data.

A universal need across all organizations regardless of their current state is education. As noted above, misconceptions about DEIB are common. To be successful in changing cultures to promote DEIB, it is essential that stakeholders understand the proposed change. Education may provide opportunities to facilitate open communication and relationship building, depending on the format chosen. Common strategies are online modules, webinars, and toolkits to use in practice. Whenever possible, facilitated discussions by trained DEIB practitioners are encouraged, as they provide ambulatory care nurses with a safe space to participate in simulations and ask questions (Harrington et al., 2022).

Nurse Advocacy

Ambulatory care nurses are on the front lines of patient care and have insight into the issues facing the communities they serve, including their workplaces. As such, ambulatory care nurses find themselves in the position to serve as advocates daily. The key is to capitalize on the moments that



For an example of a DEIB toolkit, scan the QR code.

present themselves and to actively engage in strategies promoting inclusion.

Advocacy is a show of public support for an issue or cause. The American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN) and organizations across the world have advocated for DEIB in their respective places. Advocates provide support and bring attention to injustices (Florell, 2021). Florell (2021) argues there is another step beyond advocacy that includes full participation in seeking change in the form of action. Nursing practice and research support both personal and collective action by nurses.

Action takes many shapes and can be organizationally, politically, or community focused. Further, advocacy backed with an operational strategy is outcomes focused and actionable. Education on topics such as health policy, reimbursement, and social justice are practical starting points for empowering ambulatory nurses to activate and advocate (Harrington et al., 2022).

Measuring Progress

The methods and models used to effect positive change for a more inclusive culture are dependent on the knowledge, skills, and attitude of the responsible persons. Variability in methods may contribute to challenges in measuring success and progress. Although defining outcome measures may be challenging in some instances, having clearly defined outcomes is crucial to our ability to measure progress.

Wang and co-authors (2024) published a systematic review of DEIB and

antiracism training. Of the studies reviewed ($n=23$), 65% delivered a one-time training session, with the majority in-person. Most of the participants in the trainings across studies were women and convenience samples were used. Although in smaller numbers, all the multi-session DEIB trainings reported greater improvement in measured outcomes. In total, more than half the studies reported improvements in knowledge, attitude, and in some cases behavior change (Wang et al., 2024). Based on their findings, they made several recommendations, including measurement of progress.

There are four recommendations to facilitate measurement of progress (Wang et al., 2024):

- 1) Provide multi-session longitudinal training to improve and measure outcomes based on established objectives.
- 2) Use validated measures such as the Implicit Association Test (Harvard University, 2011).
- 3) Reach out to other nurses and colleagues to share resources and compare results.
- 4) Utilize resources from professional organizations such as AAACN (n.d.).

Summary

Barriers to DEIB practice and progress are the entrenched myths and misconceptions about the purpose and impact of DEIB initiatives. This article investigated some of these myths to invoke reflection and action among ambulatory care nurses. Although broad recommendations can be made, research on DEIB shows there is no one-size-fits-all method for every situation or organization (Hassen et al., 2021).

The universal thread linking the work being done is an emphasis on the importance of DEIB initiatives in creating a more inclusive world and providing insight into practical strategies for

ambulatory care nurses to engage in DEIB efforts effectively. Some of these strategies include conducting organizational surveys, prioritizing education, advocating for change, and measuring progress over time. By fostering open communication coupled with strategy, ambulatory care nurses can help create a more equitable healthcare environment for all. ●

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