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# Improving healthcare workforce diversity

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The world is increasingly becoming a global village, resulting in an increasingly diversified patient population. Ideally, given the ease of movement, patients seek healthcare outside their countries of origin. This has created an urgent need to develop a diversified workforce to cater to this changing demographic (1). By improving healthcare workforce diversity, stakeholders can offer a complete range of services and meet the needs of an increasingly diverse patient population. Various sources of diversity will need to be explored if a truly diverse workforce is to be developed. In a global environment, all stakeholders must share the responsibility for improving diversity within the healthcare workforce.

Diversity and inclusion are two key features that are frequently mentioned in the delivery of quality healthcare services. Healthcare practitioners will nearly always play a role in addressing diversity issues, including cultural sensitivity and awareness within their service provision (2). Some of the sources of diversity they have to contend with include language, which is the most important factor when it comes to comprehending and communicating with the patient, then there is a culture which is a highly variable construct that can have a significant impact on healthcare experience, and these factors will affect the ability of the healthcare practitioner to deliver optimal care (3). Consequently, there is a need to develop a culturally competent workforce that can appreciate these differences and incorporate them during patient care.

Other issues that emerge as a result of the increased diversity of patients in the healthcare setting include sexuality, faith claims, and gender identity. Sexuality affects the ability of the healthcare practitioner to deliver care sensitively, in addition to potentially hurting the patient's clinical care (4). Gender identity and sexuality are seen as significant issues that need to be addressed by healthcare practitioners as part of their role, which the experience of transsexual healthcare workers can evidence. Finally, an individual's faith and spirituality can sometimes impact how they accept and understand the illness, thus impacting their healthcare experience (4). Ultimately these factors play a crucial role in patient outcomes creating a need for a diverse workforce.

The creation of Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce promotes the inclusion of all members of society to practice medicine and take ownership of their communities. Inclusion is one aspect that should be emphasized as it prepares the healthcare workforce for patients with diverse backgrounds (5). Improving healthcare workforce diversity will encourage providers to increase awareness of these issues and empower them with the necessary skills to respond holistically to the demands of an increasingly diversified patient population (5). Moreover, healthcare providers and their institutions must address the needs of the specific patient populations that are not being served and promote inclusion to create a more fulfilling relationship between them and their patients. Through this approach, the healthcare organization can improve patient outcomes through a holistic treatment approach.

Various strategies have been developed and adopted to improve diversity within the healthcare industry. These strategies have, however, varied in their approach, scope, and effectiveness. Some of these strategies include sensitivity training for healthcare providers, a

common strategy used to improve diversity in the healthcare workforce (1). The main aim of this strategy is to improve cultural sensitivity within the community by providing prospective healthcare providers with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of their diverse patients (5). This is achieved by increasing awareness on various issues such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and body stature, among several others. Orientation programs are also used to promote diversity in the healthcare workforce. These programs focus on individual development, which covers professional issues such as credentialing; there are also personal development skills that help a newcomer adapt to the new setting. Finally, policies and legislation that aim to eliminate discrimination and ensure that the healthcare system is inclusive of all people have been developed to encourage inclusion and diversity within the healthcare workforce. These policies.

These remedies are, however, normative as such, are limited in their effectiveness. Some of the weaknesses of the proposed strategies include the fact that they are not culturally specific (4). Healthcare providers need to develop knowledge, awareness, and skills to respond to the needs of various clientele, which is limited in implementation. The strategies also lack a clear framework that should be adopted, which makes them challenging to implement (4). The diversity in the healthcare workforce should be approached cautiously by the healthcare industry as a whole since the creation of this initiative can lead to unintended negative impacts on their working practices (3). Finally, these measures are not easily adaptable to various situations that demand diversity within the healthcare sector.

The local government in various jurisdictions should be held accountable for developing and adopting policies that will support diversity and inclusion within the various healthcare institutions under its care. Given the government's oversight role in the healthcare industry, it is better placed to support the creation of a diverse healthcare workforce that can deliver quality healthcare services to the community (1). Local governments should, however, be cognizant of certain considerations when creating appropriate policies that will ensure inclusion and diversity within the various healthcare institutions within their jurisdictions. Such considerations include the following: laws that prohibit healthcare discrimination; policies that promote an inclusive environment;

and ensuring that senior providers and decision-makers in various institutions acknowledge the issue and respond to it.

Overall, improving healthcare workforce diversity is not an easy endeavor for the healthcare industry. Many factors need to be considered and addressed to achieve this goal. Strategies developed by the healthcare sector should incorporate policy and legislative measures and culturally specific programs (1). Moreover, these policies should be in line with existing legislation since they directly impact the operation of these organizations, in addition to creating a sense of inclusion within the healthcare workforce. These policies' success depends on their mode of implementation and cultural diversity, so these strategies must be implemented effectively and consistently to avoid any negative impact on their working standards. These strategies should be re-evaluated and modified as necessary to ensure a successful result. Finally, the healthcare industry should be held accountable for the implementation of these strategies and be expected to demonstrate the necessary commitment to diversity in the workforce.

## Author contributions

YZ is the primary and the only author who contributed to this article. All author contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

## Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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