

SOCIAL CAPITAL OF TRAUMA IN MEDICAL SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

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Medical schools across the U.S. are working to diversify their student populations to match the intersectionality of our nation and change the historically white and wealthy culture of biomedicine. In this pursuit, medical school admissions have been increasing the importance of qualitative measures in determining acceptance over the standard quantitative metrics. One of the most influential pieces of the application is the personal statement. In the personal statement it is not uncommon, and sometimes even explicitly asked by the institution, that the potential student discuss adversity they have overcome. Quinn Capers IV, M.D. of Ohio State College of Medicine has championed looking at implicit bias in medical school admissions particularly as it pertains to race. However, it remains unexplored how the hidden norms of the traditional culture of medicine may affect how certain adverse events are viewed. We question whether implicit bias impacts how admissions faculty perceives different types of adversity as either portraying the applicant as resilient or perhaps stigmatizing themselves by sharing this event. By anonymously surveying admissions faculty from two medical schools in Philadelphia we take a preliminary look at what topics are viewed as more or less appropriate and how these may impact the admissions committee's perception of the applicant. Our results can compare how topics like mental health and domestic violence are viewed against topics like chronic illness and sports injury. As we look to diversify the medical field, we need to be open to accepting individuals whose paths into medicine may have personal topics we are less familiar or comfortable with. The pervasive patriarchal and previously entirely homogenous culture of biomedicine may be disadvantaging to those who choose to share adverse experiences in their application that are less socially palatable even if these experiences were formative to their decision to enter medicine.

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Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify how implicit bias may set back the diversity of the medical fields through admissions
2. Investigate how adverse events may be exploited by medical school admissions committees to confer resilience