

Understanding the postgraduate training experiences of Black doctors: a study of resilience

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Introduction

The experience of Black medical doctors in postgraduate training has been described in various studies as a unique one influenced by both internal and external factors. An underrepresented group making up just 5.9% of doctors working within the NHS (NHSDigital, 2023), can make navigating the training programme for Black doctors one of isolation and feeling dismissed (Green, 2023).

As a Black doctor, the sometimes-daily encounters of racial discrimination in the form of anything from microaggressions to overt racism, over time can start to affect the psyche of a Black doctor, which may affect their levels of resilience in either a positive way where they are able to overcome and excel, or negatively leading to depression and burnout (Green, 2023).

Objective

1. To explore the experience of Black doctors in postgraduate training
2. To understand how this experience influences resilience during postgraduate training.

Methodology

Nine participants were recruited to the study.

All participants were Black doctors in postgraduate training in the United Kingdom.

Demographics - 1 male, 8 females

A multi-method approach to data collection which included:

1. Focus group interview (online MS Teams) with a total of five participants.
2. Semi-structured, one-to-one interviews (online MS Teams) with seven participants.



Results

Narrative of participants

THE CHALLENGES AS A BLACK DOCTOR, OTHERS DON'T EXPERIENCE

TRAINING IS EASIER IF YOU CAN CODE SWITCH. IT JUST FEELS LIKE YOU CAN'T BE YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF AT WORK BECAUSE YOU'RE VERY AWARE OF HOW VISIBLE YOU ARE, IF THAT MAKES SENSE.

BEING A BLACK DOCTOR COMES WITH CERTAIN TROPES AND VIEWS THAT PEOPLE HAVE THAT MATERIALLY IMPACT HOW I GO THROUGH MY TIME IN THE HOSPITAL

I'VE LITERALLY HAD A BUCKET GIVEN AND PUT NEXT TO ME WHEN I WAS WRITING THE OPERATION NOTE WITH SOMEBODY ASKING ME TO TRY AND HELP CLEAN UP THE THEATRE. OR BEING ASKED TO MOVE BEDS IN ED.

REPRESENTATION REALLY MATTERS AND NOT SEEING YOURSELF OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN CAN DEFINITELY LEAD TO BURNOUT

SO YOU HAVE TO WORK TWICE AS HARD TO GET THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES

YOU WOULD WALK INTO A ROOM AND BE INTRODUCED AS THE DOCTOR AND PEOPLE LOOK AT YOU LIKE YOU'VE GOT TWO HEADS, BECAUSE HOW COULD YOU POSSIBLY BE

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION FROM PATIENTS, AT LEAST AT THE START OF MY TRAINING, USED TO MAKE ME FEEL LESS RESILIENT, BECAUSE IT RAMPED UP THE IMPOSTER SYNDROME

AS A BLACK TRAINEE I FEEL I CANNOT AFFORD TO BE LESS RESILIENT, TOUGH SITUATIONS HAVE MADE ME MORE RESILIENT

Thematic Analysis

Five themes generated:

1. Negative experiences of patients and colleagues
2. The effects of racial discrimination
3. Differential attainment
4. Resilience
5. Improving resilience and protective factors



Conclusion so far...

There was a shared lived experience amongst the participants of racial discrimination both from patients and colleagues.

Being Black appeared to be associated with certain negative stereotypes which they believed they had to fight daily to disprove, and are not always afforded the same opportunities in training as their White colleagues, "passive exclusion".(Dr B)

Despite the experiences of racial discrimination the resilience of the participants remained high due to numerous protective factors such as family support, faith and positive role models.

References

- NHSDigital. (2023). NHS Workforce. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/workforce-and-business/workforce-diversity/nhs-workforce/latest/>
- Green, C. A. (2023). Resilience—The Last Thing We Need. *New England journal of medicine*, 388(18), e62.