Addressing and Evaluating for Unconscious Bias in the MSPE

Sessions on Medical Education
Nagaraj Gabbur, MD-- Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra Northwell
Cecile Foshee, PhD-- Cleveland Clinic, Education Institute
Gina Luciano, MD, FACP-- Mercy Medical Center
Allison Guerin, MA, EdD-- Stanford University School of Medicine
Cynthia Burns, MD-- Wake Forest School of Medicine
Aleece Caron, PhD-- MetroHealth Medical Center

Session Plan:
Introduction:
Unconscious (or implicit) biases are learned stereotypes that are automatic, unintentional, deeply ingrained, universal, and able to influence behavior (1). These biases are commonly seen in spoken conversation, non-verbal body language, in writing and are pervasive in society. They can be seen in all facets of medical education including admission to medical school (2). The MSPE, formerly called the Deans letter, is meant to be a summary letter of evaluation intended to provide residency program directors an honest and objective summary of a student’s salient experiences, attributes, and academic performance (3). Although the AAMC recommends a certain format for the MSPE there still exits significant variation in its presentation (4, 5, 6, 7).
Even though unconscious bias is frequently unintentional, it still exists in the MSPE. In one study, the choice of adjective in the MSPE Summary Statement was the greatest influencer of applicant desirability more than the rest of the document (8). In another study membership to the Gold Humanism Society gave the perception that the student had more humanistic qualities (9).
Unconscious bias can not only play a role in how the MSPE is read but also in how it is written especially regarding the narrative comments. Fortunately there are strategies to combat unconscious bias (10).
In this workshop, participants will learn how unconscious bias can affect writing the MSPE as well as reading the MSPE.
This Session Proposal is submitted by the AAMC GEA GME Steering Committee.

Session Agenda:
Session Outline:
1. Background and Introduction to problem 10 min
2. Audience shown practical examples of Unconscious Bias using video and slides 15 min
3. Sample MSPEs handed out and small groups at each table examine them for unconscious bias using a rubric/checklist. Participants at each table work together to write revisions in the MSPE narrative to decrease bias. Each table has a different sample MSPE. The presenters at the same time are helping to facilitate each table - 20 min
4. Each table reports out about their MSPE and suggests a revision of the narration. At the same time the MSPE will be displayed on the screen and revisions shown on the screen with audience comments 20 mins.
5. Questions, Conclusion and Reflection for Future Practice 10 min

Learning Objectives:
1. Understand and Learn how to recognize unconscious bias in an MSPE
2. Apply strategies to decrease unconscious bias
3. Construct better narrative comments with decreased bias for the MSPE