

Quality Resource Guide

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) — A Primer for the Dental Office

Author Acknowledgements

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The following commentary highlights fundamental and commonly accepted practices on the subject matter. The information is intended as a general overview and is for educational purposes only. This information does not constitute legal advice, which can only be provided by an attorney.

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The content of this Guide is subject to change as new scientific information becomes available.

Educational Objectives

Following this unit of instruction, the learner should be able to:

1. Explain why DEI is important in the dental office setting.
2. List terms often associated with diversity, equity and inclusion.
3. Give examples of microaggressions and micro-affirmations.

Introduction

Diversity, equity and inclusion involve strategies intended to make your practice a welcoming environment for both employees and patients. In my experience as president of a multi specialty group dental practice, employing as many as 150 individuals, I saw that understanding the impact and benefit of individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, races, abilities, and religious and sexual orientations was vital to our success. When individuals are struggling with issues of fairness and respect, they may not be able to focus as much on the needs of others, and the needs of the dental practice.

This MetLife Quality Resource Guide will introduce the concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion to those with basic awareness and strengthen the knowledge of those already familiar with them.

MetLife designates this activity for **1.0 continuing education credits** for the review of this Quality Resource Guide and successful completion of the post test.

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DEI — What do the terms mean?

Diversity is the presence of differences such as ethnicity, race, age, religion, gender, physical abilities, and sexual orientation. Other examples include socioeconomic status, marital status, language, nationality, political perspectives, and military/veteran status.

Diversity also refers to groups that have been historically disadvantaged in social, political and economic spheres, including African

Americans and Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders. Diversity may also include a range of ideas, perspectives and values.

Equity is recognition that different people may have different needs in order to reach the same access, resources and opportunities. Equality is providing everyone with the same opportunity and resources, while equity is fairness according to need.

Inclusion is an environment where every person feels welcomed, valued, respected and supported. As policy, differences are not suppressed, but valued.

DEI in Dental Practice

What are Microaggressions?

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. In many cases, these hidden messages may invalidate the group identity or experiential reality of target persons, demean them on a personal or group level, communicate they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong with the majority group, threaten and intimidate, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment.

Derald Wing Sue, PhD

Author, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*

Examples of Microaggressions

Microaggression	Underlying Assumption/Hidden Meaning
Being mistaken for someone in the same racial group.	People of your race are all the same.
A dentist calls a dental assistant who is of Chinese Descent the name of the assistant who is of Vietnamese descent. "I always get them confused because they look alike."	Your culture isn't valued here.
A dental assistant asks a newly-hired dental hygienist: "Where were you born? Your English is perfect."	You're not really American, like I am. You don't belong here.
A dentist compliments a patient who is a person of color: "You have good diction."	Most people of color are not as well-spoken.
A hygienist is training a new employee who is Native American. "I didn't expect you to be so skilled at this."	It's unusual for someone of your race to do this task well.
A dentist decides to send a younger dental hygienist to a national dental meeting in a distant state. "The younger hygienist won't be too tired to attend the educational sessions after partying late into the evening."	Older people can't do as much.

DEI — What You Can Do Now

Be an Ally

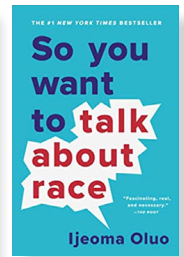
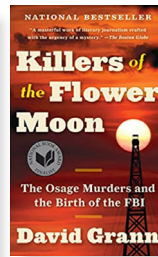
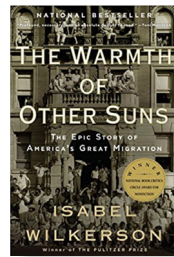
What do you do when you see someone acting in a way that is unkind?

- Don't go along with a hurtful joke.
Say: "That doesn't make sense to me."
- When someone stereotypes a group, you could ask: "Who are you referring to when you say that?"
- Make an observation: "I don't rely on assumptions about an entire group of people."
- Ask: "Why do you say that?"

Build Your Team's DEI Competency

Provide a copy of one of these books to each member of your team.

Set aside an hour for a book club type discussion.



What are Micro-Affirmations?

According to author Mary Rowe, micro-affirmations are tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, and graceful acts of listening. "Micro-affirmations lie in the practice of generosity, in consistently giving credit to others - in providing comfort and support when others are in distress." (Rowe, M. Micro-affirmations and Micro-inequities. *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association*, 2008.)

Encourage Micro-Affirmations

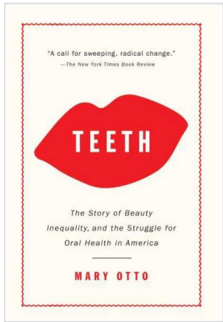


Helpful Micro-Affirmations

Here are some examples of statements and acts that reinforce a person's value and accomplishments:

- Talk about "families" rather than "mom" or "dad" or "parents." Use "our" instead of "my" when mentioning your practice.
- Pronounce names of team members and patients correctly. You learned how to pronounce all those medications, so you've got this! Have a place in the patient's record for a phonetic pronunciation of names.
- If you have a team member who uses a nickname instead of their full name, ask — in a private conversation — if they would prefer their full name to be used going forward.
- Learn something about each team member and ask them about it in a way that shows you care.
- Always say: "Thank you for your help" to make all team members feel like they belong in your practice.
- Use images that discourage biases in your printed and digital materials.
- Use Comic Sans, Arial, or Dyslexie fonts for your staff and patient education materials. These fonts make it easier for people with different types of disabilities like dyslexia to read.
- Remind team members about biases at key moments, such as before interviewing candidates for a position.
- Invite everyone, including younger team members, to offer input on ongoing projects.
- When someone is recognized for an idea that someone else put forward earlier, give the earlier contributor recognition as well.
- Celebrate employee differences.

What Are Health Disparities



According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, a health disparity is a particular type of health difference closely linked with social or economic disadvantage. When a particular group of people has less than average access to healthcare, education, and/or healthy behaviors,

members of the group can fall behind on many different health measures. These disparities can often persist for generations. Mary Otto's book, *Teeth*, can increase your knowledge about the significant impact of health disparities.

DEI — Why It Matters

Consider This

- Each of us wants to be treated with dignity and respect. It's right that we return respect and dignity to others.
- The United States of America has a core principle that all people are created equal. Although the intent was to be a welcoming country with a melting pot of talents, opposition has existed at times from those who arrived first or perceive themselves as arriving first.
- Most likely, you have an increasingly diverse patient population. Understanding their needs is critical for patient retention.
- Do you want to obtain the best talent in a competitive environment? Diverse candidates are more likely to apply to dental practices that have a public commitment to DEI.
- If your team members divide into subgroups based on age, race, culture or other factors, you can't realize better teamwork and better patient care.

What is Systemic Racism?

Systemic racism is a form of racism that is embedded as normal practice within society or an organization. Systemic racism permits discrimination in criminal justice, employment,

housing, healthcare, political power, and education. An example: racial residential segregation is linked to concentrating racialized minorities in neighborhoods that lack quality schools. This severely limits the likelihood of attending high-standard colleges. Less-than-optimal education then decreases the chances of finding well-paid, stable jobs. Poor working conditions with underpaid salaries, in turn, contributes to poor health, which poses an additional burden on often underfunded and lower-quality healthcare available to racialized minorities. (Reskin, B. (2012): The Race Discrimination System. *Annual Review of Sociology* 38, 17-35)

Additional Resources & Conclusion

What To Do Next

At metdental.com, you can earn continuing education credit for completing the post-test for this guide.

To continue to learn and understand more about DEI, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services offers an excellent, free online program, "Cultural Competency Program for Oral Health Providers." The program includes tips, self-assessments and a video case study. It is available at <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/education/oral-health-providers>.

Conclusion

I experienced bias when a young patient presented to our large group practice with a toothache. When I entered the room and asked about her tooth, she said: "My mother doesn't want me to be seen by you."

"Does your mother know me?" I asked. She responded: "No."

I went to see her mother to ask about treating her daughter. She responded: "I don't think it's right for one of them to see her." I immediately looked around to see who she was referring to as I was in front of her, and it was obviously me who was to see her daughter. I am an African American and the young girl was white.

Every individual deserves respect for their value as a member of society without judgment based on race, color, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

— Dr. Kenneth Sadler

POST-TEST

Internet Users: This page is intended to assist you in fast and accurate testing when completing the “Online Exam.” We suggest reviewing the questions and then circling your answers on this page prior to completing the online exam.

(1.0 CE Credit Contact Hour) Please circle the correct answer. 70% equals passing grade.

1. According to author Mary Rowe, micro-affirmations are:
 - a. Graceful acts of listening
 - b. Gestures of inclusion
 - c. Gestures of caring
 - d. All of the above
2. A word map activity is important in determining the environment in the practice because: (select all that apply)
 - a. It may reveal a bias.
 - b. It may demonstrate a tendency to stereotype.
 - c. It can reveal how the staff feels about, looks at or thinks of a group.
 - d. All of the above
3. An example of a micro-affirmation is to talk about “families” rather than “mom” or “dad” or “parents.”
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. If you see someone acting in a way that is unkind, you could be an ally by:
 - a. Not inviting the unkind person to future meetings.
 - b. Changing the subject quickly.
 - c. Asking: “Why do you say that?”
 - d. None of the above
5. Health disparities can persist for generations.
 - a. True
 - b. False
6. Which of the following is **NOT** a micro-aggression?
 - a. Telling a person of color: “You have good diction.”
 - b. Frequently mispronouncing a colleague’s name.
 - c. Asking a patient who is Hispanic: “Where were you born?”
 - d. Reminding colleagues about biases at key moments, such as interviewing a job candidate.
7. To offer to explain the unwritten rules of your workplace would be:
 - a. A micro-affirmation.
 - b. A microaggression.
 - c. A health disparity.
 - d. None of the above
8. _____ is recognition that different people may have different needs in order to reach the same access, resources and opportunities.
 - a. Inclusion
 - b. Equity
 - c. Diversity
 - d. None of the above
9. To help patients with dyslexia better understand your post-op instructions, you should choose which font?
 - a. Book Antiqua
 - b. Times New Roman
 - c. Arial
 - d. Helvetica
10. A microaggression can be intentional or unintentional.
 - a. True
 - b. False

