The Photo Diversity Project: Increasing the Diversity of Images Used in Classroom Teaching

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Background

• Effective classroom teaching of pathophysiology and clinical pharmacology requires numerous images.
• Diversity and inclusion are OHSU core values.
• Available professional pathology image banks often lack diversity or have limitations on the number of images that can be used.
• The need for a comprehensive, methodical approach to increasing diversity of images for teaching in the project leader’s courses was the impetus for this project.

Goals and Objectives

1. Increase the diversity of images by at least 50% in materials used in four undergraduate pathophysiology and clinical pharmacology courses:
   1a. Skin color diversity in images that depend strongly on skin color for interpretation (e.g., jaundice, pallor);
   1b. Diversity of age, skin color, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity and expression, and visible disability in images that do not necessarily depend strongly on skin color for interpretation (e.g., lymphedema, exophthalmos, Cushing’s syndrome).
2. Encourage other faculty to inventory the range of diversity of the images (including clip art) that they use in classroom teaching and presentations.
   2a. Skin color diversity in situations that depend strongly on skin color for interpretation (e.g., staging and care of pressure ulcers; wound care);
   2b. Diversity of age, skin color, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity and expression, and visible disability in images used, especially when discussing topics that do not focus primarily on those characteristics (e.g., pregnancy, grief, depression, chronic pain, musculoskeletal injuries).

Methods for Objective 1

Step 1. Comprehensive inventory, categorized by topic, of all images used in the project leader’s four undergraduate pathophysiology and clinical pharmacology courses.

Step 2. Intentional search by topic of professional image banks, journal articles, and other sources focusing on objective 1a.

Step 3. Intentional search by topic of professional image banks, journal articles, and other sources focusing on objective 1b.

Step 4. (concurrent with steps 2-3) Revise the audiovisuals used for teaching, incorporating new diverse images.

Evaluation and Next Steps

Record changes in the inventory from step 1 and compare with the initial inventory; use the results to guide new image searches and to evaluate the attainment of Project Objective 1 (concurrently with steps 2-4).

Methods for Objective 2

• Informal discussion with other faculty regarding the reason for and progress of this project, with questions included to raise their awareness of the images they use.
• Presentation of project and its progress in a proposed faculty development, end-of-term retreat session, or other venues.
• Share the inventory worksheet categories and format with faculty who wish to inventory the diversity of the images they use in teaching.

Evaluation and Next Steps

Evaluate faculty response by self-report. Next steps may include faculty coaching; creating and disseminating guidelines for successful search strategies for diverse images for teaching; and in-service education regarding skin assessment in clinical settings.

Current Progress

This project is in progress. To date, we have conducted focused image searches for 42 of the 55 topic areas identified initially. Additional topic areas await.

Example from Objective 1a: Jaundice

Image used prior to initiation of Photo Diversity Project:

Image source: James Holmna, M.D.

Selection of additional images used as a result of Photo Diversity Project:

Example from Objective 1b: Cushing’s Syndrome

Image used prior to initiation of Photo Diversity Project:

Image source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Additional image used as a result of Photo Diversity Project:

Image Source: University of Washington Teaching Photographs Archive

Responses from Students

The results of this project are being incorporated into classroom teaching on an ongoing basis.

“Thank you for finding photos of jaundice in dark skin.”

(unsolicited comment from student).

Responses from Faculty

Informal discussion with individual faculty to date has raised awareness of lack of diversity of images used in teaching.

“Said with rueful grimace regarding photos used in class:

“Yes, they are all white. I need to do something about that. You are going to share those resources with me, aren’t you?”

Impact and Effectiveness

The unspoken messages carried by photographs and other images of people influence student attitudes and values. Intentional inclusion of diversity in all images used in teaching will foster effective education of healthcare personnel who incorporate OHSU values into their patient care.

• This project contributes to education by supporting the values of diversity and inclusion through the unspoken messages conveyed by the images that faculty use.
• It contributes to better patient care in helping nurses and other healthcare professionals recognize clinical signs that depend on changes in skin color, in people with diverse baseline skin colors.
• Possible applications in the future might include development and dissemination of resources to motivate and assist other faculty to increase the diversity of images used in teaching.