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Request for Proposals: Systematic Literature Review of Bias and Stigma Among Health Care Professionals Toward Patients with Substance Use Disorders

The AAMC and its member institutions are actively working to advance medical research, education, and clinical care that address substance use disorders.¹ Substance use disorders occur when the recurrent use of substances causes clinically significant impairment (e.g., health problems, disability, failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home).² Negative or stigmatizing attitudes of health professionals towards patients with substance use disorder have been described as common and contributing to suboptimal health care for patients with substance use disorder. Contributing factors such as lack of adequate education, training, and support structures for working with this population have been described.³ Structural stigma interventions designed to improve the attitudes of medical students towards people with substance use disorder have been described, and demonstrated some success; but the small scale, short duration, lack of controls, range of interventions and variety of outcome measures necessitated more extensive evaluation of these interventions.⁴ There is a critical need for a more up to date understanding of the extent and effects of stigma and the evidence base for strategies to mitigate stigma to inform medical education and clinical care of patients with substance use disorder. This need is driven by the ongoing opioid epidemic but also by deepening awareness of health disparities in both behavioral and chronic illnesses.

This systematic review will assess the role of bias and stigma towards patients with substance use disorder and existing research that has empirically evaluated interventions designed to reduce bias and stigma among health care professionals. A systematic review is defined as a process to “collate all empirical evidence that fits pre-specified eligibility criteria to answer a specific research question. It uses explicit, systematic methods that are selected to minimize bias, thus providing reliable findings from which conclusions can be drawn and decisions made.”⁵

¹ <https://www.aamc.org/what-we-do/improving-health-people-everywhere>

² <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disorders>

³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0376871613000677>

⁴ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2011.03601.x>

⁵ Liberati, A., Altman, D.G., Tetzlaff, J., Mulrow, C., Gøtzsche, P.C., Ioannidis, J.P.A., Clarke, M., Devereaux, P.J., Kleijnen, J. and Moher, D. (2009), “The PRISMA Statement for Reporting Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses of Studies That Evaluate Health Care Interventions: Explanation and Elaboration”, PLOS Medicine, Vol. 6 No. 7, p. e1000100, <http://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000100>

Proposed research question:

How does health professionals' bias and stigma towards patients with substance use disorders impact health care and what is the evidence for mitigating these attitudes?

Inclusion criteria:

- Studies from health professions education through professional practice;
- Qualitative and quantitative research studies;
- Publications between 2011-2021.

Exclusion criteria:

- Reviews, commentaries and letters;
- Studies originating from outside of the U.S. and Canada;
- Studies outside the health professions.

The systematic review will be submitted for peer-reviewed publication (with right of first-refusal from Academic Medicine). Strict adherence to the timeline described below will be critical and research teams who are unable to dedicate the needed resources to complete this review in a timely manner, are discouraged from applying. This review should examine the extent, range, and nature of scholarly activity on the selected research question. This review should also summarize findings and identify research gaps in the existing literature. Recommendations for further research should be included in the review. The standards set forth by the Institute of Medicine are strongly encouraged when conducting and reporting the systematic review.⁶

Eligibility and team composition:

- The institution that receives the funds must be in the US or Canada.
- Preference will be given to teams where at least one team member is on the faculty of an AAMC member school.
- At least one team member must either be a librarian or have equivalent search expertise.
- At least one team member must have successfully completed and published one or more systematic reviews of the literature.
- Authors are strongly encouraged to consider including team members who:
 - Are health professions learners;

⁶ Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Standards for Systematic Reviews of Comparative Effectiveness Research. Finding What Works in Health Care: Standards for Systematic Reviews. Eden J, Levit L, Berg A, Morton S, editors. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2011. PMID: 24983062.

- Have expertise in addiction medicine;
- Have expertise in medical education, designing curriculum in addiction medicine, bias, or stigma;
- Have complementary experience, such as policy experts, sociologists or organizational psychologists, practicing clinicians, health professions educators, and patients/families; and
- Represent multiple forms of diversity (e.g., institution, experience, race, gender, specialty).

Funding:

Teams will receive up to \$30,000 in two payments of \$15,000 and \$15,000 (first payment up front, second payment at completion). **Funding for this project provided, in part, by the National Institutes on Drug Abuse (NIDA).**

Timeline:

- Proposals due: July 2, 2021
- Selection of systematic review team: August 2, 2021
- Dispersion of first payment: August 15, 2021
- Status updates at 3 and 6 months: November 1 and February 1, 2022
- High-level summary of results and analysis: August 1, 2022
- Publication-ready manuscript: October 1, 2022
- Dispensation of second payment: after submission of publication-ready manuscript.

How to Apply

Proposal format:

Prepare proposal and related documents according to instructions below. Send all documents in single email message to abarrios@aamc.org no later than July 2, 2021 11:59 PM EST. Proposals will include a summary of the proposed plan for completing the review, proposed budget, and current CVs.

Compilation of abbreviated curriculum vitae: Each author must submit a two-page abbreviated CV. CVs for all authors should be combined into a single (PDF) document for submission.

1. The proposal, which shall not exceed 1500 words: Title, authors, budget, CVs and references do not count toward word limit. One table or figure may be included. The proposal must include the following sections:

- Authors and their institutional affiliation(s)—identify the unique role that each of the authors will play in the project. Include a brief description of the team members' experience with reviews of the literature, including citations to published reviews and experience with addressing stigma and addiction among health care providers and those in training.
- Describe how this work will add to or build upon the existing literature in the field.
- Delineate steps and process that will be followed when conducting the review.
- Literature sources to be searched.
- Present a timeline that clearly indicates how the review, synthesis, and paper submission will be accomplished in the allotted time.
- References.

Budget:

Budget cannot exceed \$30,000 and should include itemized costs and justification. Fundable components include: Administrative or technical support to carry out specific project-related work, supplies, communication expenses, salary support for specific work related to the project. Items not supported by the contract include: indirect costs, overhead, and travel.

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. Includes all required information
2. Meets eligibility requirements
3. Aligns with goals of systematic review
4. Experience and diversity of research team
5. Plan for the systematic review is logical and in alignment with goals
6. Timeline is clear and on target
7. Appropriate use of budget

For more information:

Inquiries should be addressed to Adrien Barrios of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships in Medical Education, at abarrios@aamc.org