

Black, Asian and ethnically diverse student experiences in Radiotherapy Education – A UK survey

Purpose and aims

In UK higher education (HE) longstanding data indicates an awarding gap⁽¹⁾ which sees students from Black, Asian and ethnically diverse backgrounds have on average an 8.8% reduction in their chance of being awarded a 2.1 or 1st class degree

Students studying for degrees in healthcare must navigate a dual learning environment of higher education institutions and clinical practice. Currently, there is a lack of evidence on how this impacts student success and no evidence specifically in radiotherapy education.

This research aimed to explore the experiences of ethnically diverse students studying radiotherapy in placement and higher education settings and to understand how these experiences impact success and perceptions of the profession.

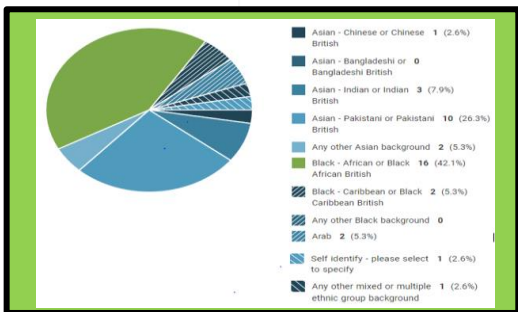


Figure 1. Ethnicity of survey participants

Methods

A mixed methods online survey was developed from a student-led workshop⁽²⁾ and themes from the evidence base. Undergraduate students self-identifying as coming from Black, Asian, and ethnically diverse backgrounds studying radiotherapy were invited to participate through promotion to programme leaders at the 14 HE institutions delivering Radiotherapy undergraduate programmes in the UK.

Results

38 students responded, 74% female and 26% male. 87% were aged 18-29 and were studying across nine HE institutions in England (North & South regions) Wales and Scotland. A range of ethnicities were represented (see Figure 1) with most respondents identifying as coming from a Black African background.

Qualitative findings

Within the academic and clinical placement setting, positive learning experiences were communicated in both the HE and placement environments. A passion for patient care, motivation to achieve a degree and being able to change the profession from within, led to most students feeling positive about their future careers. However, microaggressions and incivility combined with poor teaching and feedback methods were reported to have an impact on learning in the placement setting. Pressure to succeed from family and wider culture and pressure that students put on themselves due to time and money invested was also seen (figure 2)



Figure 2. Example qualitative responses

Quantitative Findings

Students reported a lower sense of belonging in clinical placement than in the HE setting, with racial microaggressions indicated to be more common in the clinical environment. Overt acts of racism were rare but were still reported to have taken place whilst on clinical placement (see Figure 3)

Do you feel a sense of belonging? (Q7 and 15)		
	University	Placement
Yes	84.2%	60.5%
No	15.8%	39.5%

Experienced a microaggression (Q10, Q17)		
	University	Placement
Yes	18.4%	39.5%
No	76.3%	52.6%
Not sure	5.3%	7.9%

Experienced an overt act of racism (Q11, Q18)		
	University	Placement
Yes	5.3%	23.7%
No	94.7%	76.3%

Figure 3. Sense of belonging and experiences of microaggression and racism in the dual learning environment of HE and clinical placement.

Recommendations

Eradicating incidents of racism and microaggressions in radiotherapy education is critical. The development of proactive, anti-racist strategies and pedagogical initiatives, specific to the demands of clinical education are central to improving the student experience for Black, Asian and ethnically diverse students and reducing the awarding gap.

Acknowledgements

My thanks go to all the students who took the time to share their often deeply personal experiences in the survey.

References

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