



Norwich Medical School, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ, UK

j.semlyen@uea.ac.uk

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## STOP RACISM TO STOP COVID-19

### Medical schools and other educational institutions need to tackle racism head on

Joanna Semlyen, Bhairavi Hariharan, Benz Josiah, Kaobi Okongwu, Louisa Sowah Quarshie, Veena Rodrigues

We agree with Karan and Katz that “there is much work to be done” to stop racism.<sup>1</sup> The #BlackLivesMatter movement shines a light on the fatal consequences of systemic racism suffered by black people in their ordinary lives, irrespective of the pandemic. To tackle racial prejudice in medicine, we need to speak directly to racial inequalities and create a workforce that is educated and reflective about racism and its detrimental effects.

Evidence of institutional racism already exists.<sup>2</sup> Repeatedly asking black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) medical students and doctors to tell their stories, to capture their experiences before instigating action, not only serves to retraumatise but delays and may prevent finding and implementing solutions. These experiences are widely shared, known, and understood. Instead let’s take action.

Let’s educate our future physicians. Let’s talk about racism and empower our students to tackle it when they face it, see it, or hear it. Let’s teach how racism can affect health and wellbeing and what we can do to root out racism.

Norwich Medical School students and staff have co-created bystander intervention training, to enable individuals to recognise and call out intentional and unintentional racist behaviour and microaggressions that they witness on campus, during placements, or in any other setting. The training encourages bystander peers and tutors to implement a united front and shared accountability to deal with racism. The school has also developed an academic mentoring scheme for BAME medical students to build confidence and inspire junior students to take control of their own personal development, with support from a senior student mentor.

We hope other medical schools will follow our lead and take action now. We need to create graduates who are prepared for practice but also well informed about racism and its detrimental impact on society. Let’s promote and foster allyship among our white colleagues. Let’s have a medical workforce that is committed to equality for all. Let’s speak up and speak out.

Competing interests: None declared.

Full response at: <https://www.bmj.com/content/369/bmj.m2244/rr-0>.

- 1 Karan A, Katz I. There is no stopping covid-19 without stopping racism. *BMJ* 2020;369:m2244. doi: 10.1136/bmj.m2244 pmid: 32518097
- 2 Woolf K. Differential attainment in medical education and training. *BMJ* 2020;368:m339. doi: 10.1136/bmj.m339 pmid: 32047006