

Abstract

The United States has high levels of maternal morbidity and mortality relative to its peer countries. Decades of data also show significant and ongoing racial disparities in maternal health outcomes. Clinician bias and discrimination in the health system are two factors that contribute to this complex problem; however, the impact of tools like implicit bias training for clinicians is unclear. This quality improvement project involved the implementation of an implicit bias training intervention for maternity care nurses (n=41) at a hospital in a major metropolitan area. Changes in 1) attitudes and awareness, 2) self-efficacy for addressing bias, and 3) use of practices to mitigate bias were measured using pre-post surveys and at a 6-week follow-up. There was a statistically significant increase in attitude scores after completing the training. There was a slight negative effect on self-efficacy scores and a slight positive effect on practice scores, but these were not statistically significant. Additionally, there was a high level of variation among participant responses. There was a significant correlation between level of education and higher scores, but there was no correlation with racial identity, years of experience, or maternity care specialty. These results suggest that while implicit bias training may have a positive impact on attitudes and awareness of bias, it has an unclear impact on self-efficacy and self-reported behaviors, and individual clinicians may respond very differently to training. Further research is needed to understand how best to address implicit bias among clinicians and the potential impact on maternal health outcomes.

Keywords: Implicit bias, bias training, maternal health, maternal mortality, health disparities