Stereotypes in medical education: How open-minded doctors are?

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Who is the terrorist??
Who is the doctor and who is the nurse??
Who is the patient with AIDS??
Stereotypes in Healthcare

• There is convincing evidence that racial and ethnic disparities exist in the provision of health care.

• Stereotyping, biases and uncertainty on the part of health care providers all contribute to unequal treatment.
Attitude changes during medical education

• Some studies reported maintenance of positive attitudes, whereas others observed deterioration of attitudes throughout the duration of medical school.


• Recent studies found that students become more cynical and less idealistic toward patient and the profession.

(Woloschuk W et al 2004, Griffith CH et al 2001)
Do stereotypes change during medical education?

- Cross-sectional matched design

- **Sample:** 785 medical students from Medical School of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
  - 322 1st year medical students
  - 277 3rd year medical students
  - 163 6th year medical students
**Stereotypes about gender.**

- Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) translated. *(Glick and Fiske 1996)*

**Stereotypes about age.**

- Fraboni scale of ageism (FSA) translated. *(Fraboni et al 1990)*

**Stereotypes about sexual preference.**

- Homophobia Scale (HS) translated. *(Aguero et al 1984)*
• Women exaggerate problems at work.
• Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.
• Women should be cherished and protected by men.

(agree - disagree)

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory
• Teenage suicide is more tragic than suicide among the old.
• Complex and interesting conversation cannot be expected from most old people.
• Most old people should not be trusted to take care of infants.
• I personally would not want to spend much time with an old person.

(agree-disagree)

Fraboni scale of ageism
• Homosexuals should not be allowed to work with children.

• People who support homosexual rights are probably homosexual themselves.

• If I discovered a friend was gay I would end the friendship.

• When I see a gay person I think: “What a waste”.

  (agree - disagree)

Homophobia Scale
Overall results indicate a significant effect:

- Students show more sexist stereotypes in the sixth year ($M=3.0662$) than the third year ($M=2.8466$) off their studies ($Sd_3=.74217$, $Sd_2=.58322$).
- Students show more ageist stereotypes in the sixth year ($M=3.5465$) than the third year ($M=3.4221$) and the first year ($M=3.3654$) off their studies ($Sd_3=.53037$, $Sd_2=.44003$, $Sd_1=.47141$).
- Students show higher homophobic scores in the last year ($M=4.0355$) than the first year ($M=3.7409$) off their studies ($Sd_3=.73224$, $Sd_1=.86086$).
CONCLUSION

• During their studies medical students became more sexist, ageist and homophobic.

• Reasons for the shift in attitude scores may relate to incoming students possessing positive attitudes that cannot be further elevated, to loss of idealism coupled with the adoption of a more realistic view of medicine, and to the impact of the unintended curriculum.

• The academic debate has been rich on the role of education in managing issues of diversity in society and policy responses have been varied.

• Academic medicine can increase awareness and education regarding health disparities through several venues.
Be a free thinker and don't accept everything you hear as truth. Be critical and evaluate what you believe in.

– Aristotle