Q | If our biases are unconscious, how can we become more conscious of them? Isn’t that a contradiction in terms?
A | It sure sounds like it doesn’t it? But there are a number of things that people can do to become more conscious of unconscious biases. One of the best ideas is to visit the Project Implicit website and take the Implicit Association Test. The online site, sponsored by Harvard University is free and allows you to explore the research on unconscious bias as well as take many different tests to examine your own personal unconscious biases around issues such as: race, gender, age, weight, appearance, religion, sexual orientation, disability and other topics. The Project Implicit website located at: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/

Q | What are some best practices for overcoming unconscious biases – both as individuals and as organizations?
A | Suggestions for Battling Bias As Individuals
   A. Use tools to explore your unconscious biases (example: Implicit Association Test)
   B. Slow down, shift from “think fast” brain systems involving the amygdala to “think slow” brain systems involving the pre-frontal cortex. (See: Daniel Kahneman’s book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*)
   C. In particular, there are several strategies that appear to make a difference:
      • Information – on the psychological and physiological basis of bias
      • Motivation – internal (vs. external) motivation to change
      • Individuation – learning to see diverse others as individuals rather than as undifferentiated members of groups.
      • Direct Contact – with diverse others and communities dissimilar to yourself
• Working together as teams, as equals, in pursuit of common goals
• Context/environment – display positive images of leaders from diverse groups
• Perspective Taking – put yourself in the shoes/position of diverse others and try to imagine how they would feel in certain situations.

D. Obtain 360 degree feedback from diverse/employees/colleagues. Reverse mentoring processes can help.

Suggestions for Battling Bias Within Hospitals
A. Collect patient race, ethnicity and language (REL) data.
B. Tie patient REL data to patient outcomes (<22% of U.S. hospitals currently do this.)
C. Stratify patient complaints by patient demographics
D. Stratify patient satisfaction data by patient demographic data.
E. Create patient satisfaction report cards for providers that break out patient satisfaction by age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation as well as by first-time stranger patients and long-time, repeat patients.
F. Conduct Diversity Workforce Assessments or Diversity Climate Audits to assess employee satisfaction/engagement by diverse groups. Supplement with diversity-related focus groups.
G. Conduct Provider Cultural and Linguistic Competence Assessments to examine providers' self-assessed preparedness to treat diverse groups of patients. Compare providers' self-disclosed practice behaviors when treating these groups against national best practices.
H. Create “disparities dashboards for key metrics on both sides of the health care “house” (i.e. both workforce and patient experience)

Q | We talk a lot about how biases may contribute to disparities in healthcare. Are disparities a problem in other industries as well?
A | Absolutely. Disparities are not unique to health care... Virtually every major industry in the United States is discussing equity/disparities issues... Examples include:
A. Criminal justice and legal system
B. K-12 and Post-Secondary Education
C. Business and Industry
D. Banking/Housing – disparities in lending
E. Sports/Entertainment sectors
Q: You have discussed what providers need to know about unconscious biases. What do managers need to know about how unconscious biases may be affecting employee productivity and satisfaction?

A: Unconscious bias can infect management decisions throughout the employment life cycle:

A. Interviewing, recruitment, hiring & retention.
B. Expectations of and interactions with employees. (“Micro-inequities”)
C. Employee evaluations. (“Set Up to Fail Syndrome”– Harvard Business Review)
D. Decisions about promotions, training and other job benefits.
E. Termination and discharge decisions.

Effective corporate diversity programs are associated with higher rates of employee productivity. A study by the National Urban League (2004) found that when employees are treated with dignity and respect regardless of their differences, productivity improves by approximately 18%. The reason? Discretionary effort. People give 110% to their employer if they feel valued and appreciated for their work.

On the other hand, organizations that do not value diversity pay a high price. According to Gallop, virtually 70% of American workers feel less than fully engaged at work. That lack of engagement costs the U.S. economy approximately $450 to $550 billion dollars per year in lost productivity. While there are many reasons for this lack of engagement, at least one major factor is Diversity Related Incidents of Disrespect (DRI’s). According to the Brookings Institute, approximately 70 percent of the American workforce has experienced DRI’s at work on the basis of some diversity-related characteristic such as age, race/ethnicity, gender, religion, language/accent, national origin, sexual orientation, disability and other factors.

Q: If someone wanted to understand unconscious bias better, what resources would you recommend?

A: There are many terrific resources about unconscious bias. Here are a few of them:

• Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking, by Malcolm Gladwell
• Video: Malcolm Gladwell discussing Blink at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGBVgvisbI8
• Blind Spot: Hidden Biases of Good People, by Mahzarin Benaji and Anthony Greenwald
• Who’s In Charge? Free Will and the Science of the Brain, by Michael Gazzaniga
• Thinking, Fast and Slow, by Daniel Kahneman
• How Your Unconscious Mind Rules Your Behavior, by Leonard Mlodinow
• YouTube Video, “How Biased Are You?” discussing unconscious bias and the Implicit Association Test: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnMn5lmsZbc
• Riding the Waves of Culture by Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden Turner
The Implicit Association Test is a remarkable tool for measuring unconscious bias. What advice would you have for using this test as a training tool in the workplace or as a hiring tool to screen out biased individuals from being hired in the first place?

There are organizations that are actively using the Implicit Association Test as an employee training tool. We are aware of at least one published study where a school district required school teachers to take the IAT and then provided counseling afterwards to help teachers better understand and cope with their resulting scores. As a general rule, Critical Measures disagrees with requiring employees to take the IAT as some people are simply not prepared to cope with their test results. Like the creators of the IAT themselves, we prefer to inform people about the existence of the IAT, discuss some of the research results and let people make their own decisions about whether to take the IAT or not. It is worth noting that plaintiffs’ lawyers have, in some cases, gone to court to obtain court orders ordering businesses to disclose IAT results or to attempt to get executives and HR officials to take the IAT and disclose the results for purposes of “proving” that unconscious bias might have been a factor in class action employment decisions that adversely affected women, people of color or older workers. Thus, not having or retaining this type of data would also protect employers from unwanted litigation.

Aside from the Implicit Association Test, are there other tools for measuring or assessing unconscious bias?

Yes, there are a number of such tools. The Myers-Briggs personality inventory can help you learn about your personality profile (thinker vs. feeler, introvert vs. extrovert, judger vs. perceiver, sensor vs.intuitive). Two of the best intercultural tools on the market for better understanding cross-cultural biases are the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and the Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory, both by Mitch Hammer, Ph.D. of Hammer Consulting.

http://www.icsinventory.com/ics_inv.php

• **The IDI:** The Intercultural Development Inventory® (IDI®) assesses intercultural competence—the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. Intercultural competence has been identified as a critical capability in a number of studies focusing on overseas effectiveness of international sojourners, international business adaptation and job performance, and information, and inter-ethnic relations within nations.

• **The ICS:** The Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory is the leading tool for understanding cross-cultural conflict style preferences and how they can either accelerate or mitigate conflict. Analogous to the Myers Briggs of cross-cultural conflict, individuals take the ICS and discover their own personal, culturally-influenced conflict style and how that style differs from other major styles prevalent around the world.