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In recent years, there has been a rising awareness of the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in health care. Prioritizing DEIA in health care settings means prioritizing the best care possible for all patients and creating environments that reflect the diversity of the communities being served. Patient engagement and outcomes are improved when diverse teams are present. Although health care organizations and institutions play a key role in advancing DEIA, it is the responsibility of each person involved. Below are selected strategies that all professionals in the health care field can use to contribute to DEIA efforts in health care settings.

Cultivating Cultural Competency

Cultural competency is the ability to collaborate effectively with diverse individuals. Culturally competent care focuses on providing care that respects the diversity of the patient population. One of the main strategies to enhance cultural

competency is to broaden individuals' understanding of diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives. Individuals in health care settings should seek training and education to enhance their understanding of diversity, empathy, active listening techniques, and ability to combat implicit biases. Although many health care settings now provide cultural competency trainings and resources, individuals should go beyond what is provided to expand their self-awareness and ability to provide the best care. Additional strategies to enhance cultural competency include participating in cross-cultural experiences, and seeking mentorship and advice from diverse individuals.

Humility is also key in enhancing cultural competency. Individuals should acknowledge that even if they are actively working to enhance their cultural



competency, they might still have a limited understanding of certain experiences and might have unconscious biases they have not recognized. The key is to acknowledge that cultural competency is an ongoing learning process. As a result, health care providers should seek to interact and build relationships with individuals different from themselves in order to enhance their awareness of various perspectives and challenge their own assumptions. By fostering cultural competency, health care professionals can improve communication, enhance trust, and ultimately provide better care for the diverse populations they serve.

Fostering Empathy and Understanding

Enhancing empathy and understanding of diverse backgrounds and patient experiences is important in providing high quality patient-centered care. Empathy is the ability to understand the personal experiences of patients. The key to enhance empathy and understanding is communication, as it allows providers to better understand patients' opinions, feelings, and experiences in order to assess their real needs and provide care accordingly. Providers can seek to enhance their communication skills by being active listeners, adapting to patients' various communication styles, asking open-ended questions, and constantly seeking feedback on their communication styles. By adopting a compassionate and empathetic approach to patient care, providers can foster health care environments where all patients, regardless of their background or experiences, feel heard, valued, and supported. This ultimately leads to improved patient satisfaction and health care outcomes.

Share Your Knowledge and Speak Up

Individuals can serve as catalysts for change by not only educating themselves but also sharing their knowledge with those around them. By proactively engaging in conversations about DEIA, sharing resources, and advocating for equitable and inclusive practices, individuals can inspire positive change on a larger scale. This applies to any setting,

but it is particularly important in health care since it involves dealing with the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals. Furthermore, speaking up when witnessing discriminatory behavior is crucial in creating welcoming, safe, and respectful environments. It is through collective action that individuals can create meaningful change in advancing health equity and enhancing overall DEIA in health care spaces.

Individuals are the Key in Advancing DEIA in Health Care

Promoting DEIA in health care is not only the responsibility of organizations and institutions. Individuals hold the power to positively impact DEIA in health care by cultivating cultural competency, enhancing empathy and understanding, sharing their knowledge, and speaking up. By championing DEIA, individuals can contribute to building health care environments that are reflective of the communities they serve and promoting health equity for all.

Sources

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