Study examines how nurses understand and deal with racism in healthcare

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Few studies have explored health professionals' understanding of racism in healthcare, and how they manage it in practice. A new *Journal of Advanced Nursing* study examined the issue through five focus group

discussions with 31 maternal, child, and family health nurses working across metropolitan South Australia. These clinicians represent the core professional group working with infants and families in the first years of life.

The study explored how nurses make sense of racism in practice and contribute to ensuring that children from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds do not accumulate further disadvantage in their lives through culturally unsafe healthcare practice.

The investigators found mixed understandings and misunderstandings about the nature of racism in practice. Also, where structural racism was identified, participants did not feel capable to challenge it. The findings suggest an urgent need for the introduction of anti-discriminatory education and training in the nursing workforce.

"Child health nurses work extremely hard to partner with the families with whom they work, but their practice is sometimes compromised because the frameworks used in their primary education is outdated. These results show that we urgently need interactive and sustained anti-racist education in pre-service, graduate, and workplace education," said author Dr. Julian Grant, of Flinders University, in Adelaide, South Australia. "Most importantly we need further research to find out what anti-racist approaches work best for Australian children and families."

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