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Gender Studies Abstracts

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Equity and diversity in Canadian anesthesiology residency programs

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INTRODUCTION

Increased diversity in the health care workforce has been shown to lead to higher quality patient care, reduce health disparities, and enhance team performance.¹ The overarching trend in medicine is underrepresentation of women and minority groups in most specialties, including anesthesiology.² To address this, diversity is needed within residency training programs to create a workforce that can approach widening inequities in health care.³ Currently, there is no data regarding the demographic features of anesthesiology residents in Canada. It is important to obtain this information, as well as resident perceptions of equity and diversity within their training programs. This can then be in turn used to guide future equity and diversity initiatives within anesthesiology residency programs across Canada.

METHODS

To gather data from anesthesiology residents across Canada, we designed a brief online survey to be completed anonymously (Figure). Ethics approval was obtained from the local ethics board. The survey was distributed to program coordinators at the 17 Canadian anesthesiology residency programs, for distribution to all resident physicians in their respective training program. Only resident physicians were included in the survey. The survey consisted of 17 multiple choice questions. All questions were made optional. Question topics were made broadly to address four main categories. Firstly, response data related to postgraduate training year and residency program were collected. Next, questions related to gender and ethnic identity were posed. Additionally, trainees were asked about their perceptions of diversity within their residency cohorts, of staff at their institutions, and broadly within anesthesiology as a specialty. Finally, knowledge of existing initiatives in residency programs to foster equity and inclusion was addressed. Descriptive analysis of the resulting data was then completed to identify trends and patterns. To be included in analysis, a minimum of one answered question was required.

RESULTS

In total, 123 responses from 15 of 17 Canadian anesthesiology residency programs were received and analyzed. Of the respondents, 49% identified as male, 48% as female, and 1% as nonbinary. No respondents identified as transgender. The majority of respondents identified as heterosexual (84%), 7% identified as lesbian or gay, and 8% as bisexual. With regards to ethnicity, 68% of respondents identified as White/European, 13% as East Asian, 8% as South Asian, 4% as Black, and 1% as Indigenous. Most trainees felt that their programs contained trainees and staff of diverse backgrounds (81% and 73%, respectively) and that equity and inclusion are important in residency training (87%). Nevertheless, 52% were unaware of existing initiatives in their programs about equity and diversity. Additionally, 43% of residents reported receiving no training in antiracism, sexual harassment, gender inclusivity, unconscious bias, or microaggressions.

DISCUSSION

This study reveals a similar proportion of male and female trainees within Canadian anesthesiology residency programs. Compared to Canadian demographic data,⁴ there is similar representation of most ethnicities, however, Indigenous individuals were underrepresented. LGBTQ representation was also similar to Canadian demographic data. Most residents believe equity and inclusivity are important in training, however, the majority were not aware of any existing initiatives within their programs. Important areas of future growth include further implementation of equity and diversity initiatives to not only ensure trainees reflect the diverse communities they serve, but to educate and train them to care for minority groups.

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Figure

1. Please select your current level of training:
 - PGY1
 - PGY2
 - PGY3
 - PGY4
 - PGY5
2. Please select your Anesthesia training program:
 - University of Alberta
 - University of Calgary
 - University of British Columbia
 - University of Saskatchewan
 - University of Manitoba
 - University of Toronto
 - McGill University
 - Western University
 - McMaster University
 - Sherbrooke University
 - Queens University
 - University of Ottawa
 - Dalhousie University
 - Memorial University
 - NOSM University
 - Université de Montréal
 - Université Laval
3. What is your biological sex?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Prefer not to say
4. What is your current gender identity?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Trans male
 - Trans female
 - Non-binary / Non-conforming
 - Other
 - Prefer not to say
5. What is your sexual orientation?
 - Lesbian or gay
 - Bisexual
 - Straight/Heterosexual
 - Non- binary / third gender
 - Prefer not to say
 - Other
6. What race/ethnicity do you identify as? Please select all that apply.
 - East Asian
 - South Asian
 - South East Asian
 - West Asian
 - Middle Eastern
 - Latin X or Hispanic
 - Black or African
 - Indigenous
 - White or European
 - Other
7. Do you believe that your residency program contains trainees from diverse backgrounds?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
8. If you answered "yes" to Question 7, please select which diverse backgrounds (select as many as apply). If you did not answer "yes" to question 7, please skip this question.
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Race/Ethnicity
 - LGBTQ
9. Do you believe that the anesthesia program at your institution contains staff physicians from diverse backgrounds?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
10. If you answered "yes" to Question 9, please select which diverse backgrounds (select as many as apply). If you did not answer yes to question 9, please skip this question.
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Race/ Ethnicity
 - LGBTQ
11. How do you think your residency program compares to other residency programs at your institution, in regards diversity and inclusion?
 - More diverse than other residency programs at my institution
 - Less diverse than other residency programs at my institution
 - Not sure
12. Are you aware of any existing initiatives within your residency program to increase diversity and inclusion?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
13. Do you believe that it is important for an anesthesia residency program to demonstrate diversity and inclusivity?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
14. Do you believe Anesthesia is attracting under-represented minorities into its training programs?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
15. Did your race/ethnicity, sexuality, or gender influence your decision to pursue training in anesthesiology?
 - Yes
 - No
16. If you answered "yes" to Question 15, what factor(s) influenced your decision? Please select all that apply. If you did not answer "yes" to question 15, please skip this question.
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Sexuality
 - Gender
17. Does your resident cohort receive training at your institution in any of the following areas?
 - Anti-racism
 - Sexual harassment
 - Gender inclusivity
 - Unconscious bias
 - Microaggressions
 - Have not received training on any of these items