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## Doctor Discrimination: How to Deal With It



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Following an incident of [discrimination against medics](#) in an emergency department led to a team of Stanford University School of Medicine doctors detailing a strategy for how medics, both residents and physicians, can respond to discrimination from patients and their families.

In the incident, the father of a little boy asked an intern working in the ER if her last name meant she was Jewish. The intern told the man it was not and asked why it was relevant. The reply was that if she had been Jewish, the man would not have wanted her to treat his son.

This incident shocked Emily Whitgob, M.D., who learned such discrimination was not so uncommon. After hearing about other cases of patient bias and discrimination directed at healthcare staff on the grounds of gender, religion and race, she took action.

See Also: [Little Action on Nurse Bullying Could Harm Patients](#)

According to [Scope](#), a Stanford Medicine blog, Whitgob started to look into ways that training doctors in particular could learn to handle such incidents of discrimination.

Outcomes were published in [Academic Medicine](#). They came to the conclusion that physicians must be ready to face discrimination. "We can't prevent it, but we have to be prepared for it," Whitgob told said.

Above all, the study advises medical trainees to keep focused on their roles as doctors by not taking discriminatory comments personally and being empathetic in their responses to patients. Four actions were recommended:

**Medical Needs Come First:** If immediate medical attention is necessary, doctors should simply ignore or avoid answering the hostile comment.

**Develop a therapeutic alliance:** Often, fear is at the root of discriminatory remarks. If doctors can empathise and draw attention to the shared objective of dealing with immediate health needs, it may help diffuse the situation.

**Depersonalisation:** Never take discriminatory comments personally. A doctor's first duty is to provide medical care.

**Provide safe learning space for medical trainees:** Provision of support to interns can actively counter the possible harmful impact of hostile and discriminatory comments.

Source: [Fierce Healthcare](#)

Image Credit: Pinterest

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