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Professional Certificate in Patient Advocacy

## Cultural Competence in Advocacy

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### Acculturation

Concept: The process by which individuals adopt the cultural traits or social patterns of another group.

Related terms: assimilation, integration, cultural adaptation.

Explanation: Acculturation occurs when patients or providers encounter a new cultural environment, leading to mutual influence and adjustment in language, health beliefs, and practices.

Example: A recent immigrant learning to navigate the U.S. health system while maintaining traditional healing rituals.

Practical application: Advocacy strategies that include language support services and culturally relevant education materials facilitate smoother acculturation for patients.

Challenges: Risk of cultural loss, uneven power dynamics, and insufficient resources to address diverse needs.

### Advocacy Alliance

Concept: A coalition of stakeholders committed to promoting culturally competent patient rights.

Related terms: partnership, network, stakeholder engagement.

Explanation: Alliances bring together clinicians, community leaders, and policy makers to coordinate efforts that respect cultural diversity while advancing patient advocacy goals.

Example: A regional health coalition that includes tribal health representatives, hospital administrators, and legal advocates.

Practical application: Joint policy briefs and community forums can amplify culturally specific concerns and influence systemic change.

Challenges: Aligning divergent priorities, managing resource distribution, and sustaining long-term collaboration.

### Bias Awareness Training

Concept: Educational programs that help advocates recognize and mitigate personal and systemic biases.

Related terms: implicit bias, cultural humility, self-reflection.

Explanation: Training equips advocates with tools to identify unconscious attitudes that may affect communication, decision-making, and trust with culturally diverse patients.

Example: Workshops using the Implicit Association Test to reveal hidden racial preferences among staff.

Practical application: Incorporating bias checks into case reviews ensures equitable advocacy recommendations.

Challenges: Resistance to self-examination, limited time for training, and difficulty translating awareness into consistent behavior.

### Community Health Worker (CHW)

Concept: A layperson from the community who bridges health services and patients' cultural contexts.

Related terms: peer navigator, cultural liaison, frontline advocate.

Explanation: CHWs share language, customs, and lived experience, facilitating culturally appropriate health information and support.

Example: A Spanish-speaking CHW assisting Hispanic patients in understanding medication regimens.

Practical application: Advocates can partner with CHWs to co-design outreach programs that respect cultural norms.

Challenges: Funding stability, role clarity, and ensuring CHWs receive adequate training on advocacy principles.

### Cultural Competence

Concept: The ability of health professionals and advocates to deliver services that are respectful of and responsive to cultural differences.

Related terms: cultural safety, cultural sensitivity, cultural humility.

Explanation: It involves knowledge of cultural practices, attitudes toward health, and communication styles, enabling effective patient advocacy across diverse groups.

Example: Recognizing that some cultures prefer family decision-making over individual autonomy when discussing treatment options.

Practical application: Developing culturally tailored consent forms and decision aids that incorporate patients' values.

Challenges: Overgeneralization, static definitions, and the need for ongoing learning rather than a one-time certification.

### Cultural Humility

Concept: A lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and critique, acknowledging power imbalances in patient-advocate relationships.

Related terms: cultural competence, reflexivity, power dynamics.

Explanation: Rather than claiming mastery of another's culture, advocates adopt an open stance, inviting patients to teach them about their cultural perspectives.

Example: An advocate asking a patient, "What does your family's belief about illness mean for your care?"

Practical application: Incorporating humility statements into intake interviews to signal respect for cultural input.

Challenges: Institutional pressures for quick solutions, limited time for deep listening, and the tendency to revert to expert-driven models.

### Cultural Safety

Concept: An environment where patients feel safe to express their cultural identity without fear of discrimination or marginalization.

Related terms: cultural competence, equity, trauma-informed care.

Explanation: Safety is achieved when health services actively address power imbalances and institutional racism, allowing patients to receive care that validates their cultural values.

Example: A clinic that provides prayer spaces and respects dietary restrictions for patients of various faiths.

Practical application: Advocates conduct safety audits that assess cultural inclusivity of physical spaces and policies.

Challenges: Hidden biases, lack of measurable safety indicators, and resistance to systemic change.

### Cross-Cultural Communication

Concept: The exchange of information between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, requiring awareness of linguistic and non-verbal cues.

Related terms: interpreter services, language concordance, cultural mediation.

Explanation: Effective communication reduces misunderstandings, promotes trust, and ensures patients' cultural preferences are accurately represented in advocacy.

Example: Using a certified medical interpreter to discuss a complex diagnosis with a non-English-speaking patient.

Practical application: Advocates prepare culturally adapted scripts and visual aids for common health topics.

Challenges: Limited interpreter availability, risk of mistranslation, and varying health literacy levels.

### Disparities Assessment

Concept: Systematic evaluation of health outcome differences among cultural groups.

Related terms: equity audit, data stratification, social determinants of health.

Explanation: Identifying gaps in care informs targeted advocacy strategies to reduce inequities rooted in cultural, economic, or geographic factors.

Example: An analysis revealing higher asthma hospitalization rates among African-American children.

Practical application: Advocates develop action plans that address language barriers, housing conditions, and access to preventive care.

Challenges: Incomplete data collection, privacy concerns, and attributing causality among multiple determinants.

### Ethical Relativism

Concept: The view that moral judgments are culture-specific and that no universal ethical standards apply.

Related terms: cultural pluralism, moral universalism, ethical frameworks.

Explanation: While respecting cultural differences, advocates must balance relativism with patient safety and legal obligations.

Example: Navigating a scenario where a patient's cultural belief opposes life-saving treatment.

Practical application: Engaging ethics committees to mediate conflicts and develop culturally sensitive yet legally compliant solutions.

Challenges: Potential for cultural bias to justify harmful practices, and difficulty reconciling conflicting values.

### Family-Centric Advocacy

Concept: An approach that recognizes the central role of family in health decisions for many cultures.

Related terms: collectivist decision-making, kinship networks, shared decision-making.

Explanation: Advocates incorporate family members into discussions, respecting hierarchical or communal preferences while safeguarding patient autonomy.

Example: Including extended family in a treatment planning meeting for a patient from a collectivist culture.

Practical application: Creating consent processes that allow designated family spokespersons to participate.

Challenges: Managing divergent family opinions, protecting patient confidentiality, and navigating legal consent requirements.

### Health Literacy

Concept: The capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information needed to make appropriate health decisions.

Related terms: plain language, teach-back method, culturally appropriate education.

Explanation: Low health literacy often intersects with cultural barriers, amplifying the need for tailored advocacy.

Example: Providing medication instructions in both the patient's native language and simplified English.

Practical application: Advocates use visual tools and culturally relevant analogies to explain complex medical concepts.

Challenges: Assessing literacy without stigmatizing, adapting materials for multiple languages, and ensuring consistent messaging across providers.

### Interpreter Services

Concept: Professional language translation resources that facilitate communication between patients and health professionals.

Related terms: medical interpreter, bilingual staff, language access.

Explanation: Accurate interpretation is essential for culturally competent advocacy, ensuring patient voices are heard and respected.

Example: A certified interpreter relaying a patient's concerns about traditional remedies during a clinical visit.

Practical application: Advocates schedule interpreter presence ahead of appointments and verify interpreter certifications.

Challenges: Limited interpreter availability for rare languages, cost constraints, and potential breaches of confidentiality.

### Intersectionality

Concept: The overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage experienced by individuals with multiple marginalized identities.

Related terms: multiple minority status, layered oppression, equity lens.

Explanation: Advocacy must consider how race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability intersect to shape patient experiences.

Example: A low-income immigrant woman facing barriers due to language, gender norms, and limited insurance.

Practical application: Designing advocacy interventions that address combined barriers, such as multilingual financial counseling.

Challenges: Complexity of analysis, risk of oversimplifying individual stories, and scarcity of data that capture intersecting identities.

### Language Concordance

Concept: Matching patients with providers who share the same primary language.

Related terms: linguistic matching, bilingual clinicians, language preference.

Explanation: Concordance improves trust, reduces errors, and enhances culturally competent advocacy outcomes.

Example: Assigning a Mandarin-speaking physician to a Chinese-American patient.

Practical application: Advocates advocate for recruitment policies that increase language-matched staffing.

Challenges: Workforce limitations, geographic constraints, and maintaining quality across all languages.

### Legal Advocacy

Concept: The use of legal mechanisms to protect patients' cultural rights and ensure equitable access to care.

Related terms: patient rights, discrimination law, policy advocacy.

Explanation: Legal advocacy may involve filing complaints, navigating consent laws, or influencing legislation that impacts culturally diverse populations.

Example: Filing a complaint under the Civil Rights Act for discriminatory denial of interpreter services.

Practical application: Training advocates in relevant statutes and procedural steps to empower patients.

Challenges: Complex legal frameworks, resource-intensive processes, and potential retaliation against patients.

### Medical Ethics

Concept: Principles guiding professional conduct, including autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice.

Related terms: bioethics, cultural competence, ethical dilemmas.

Explanation: Cultural competence introduces nuance to ethical decision-making by acknowledging diverse values and belief systems.

Example: Balancing respect for a patient's cultural refusal of blood transfusion with the duty to preserve life.

Practical application: Advocates facilitate ethics consultations that integrate cultural perspectives.

Challenges: Conflicts between cultural practices and standard medical protocols, and limited guidance on culturally specific ethical issues.

### Microaggressions

Concept: Subtle, often unintentional, comments or actions that convey derogatory or negative slights toward a marginalized group.

Related terms: bias, cultural insensitivity, interpersonal discrimination.

Explanation: In health advocacy, microaggressions can erode trust and impede effective communication with culturally diverse patients.

Example: Assuming a patient's health literacy based on accent and speaking to them in a condescending tone.

Practical application: Training advocates to recognize and address microaggressions in real time.

Challenges: Difficulty in self-recognition, varying interpretations of intent, and institutional resistance to change.

### Patient-Centered Care

Concept: Health care that respects and responds to individual patient preferences, needs, and values.

Related terms: shared decision-making, cultural competence, holistic care.

Explanation: Incorporating cultural context is essential to truly patient-centered advocacy, ensuring that care plans align with cultural beliefs.

Example: Adjusting a diabetes management plan to include culturally preferred foods while meeting nutritional goals.

Practical application: Advocates use culturally adapted decision aids during care planning meetings.

Challenges: Balancing cultural preferences with evidence-based guidelines, and time constraints in busy clinical settings.

### Power Dynamics

Concept: The distribution of authority and influence between health professionals, patients, and community members.

Related terms: hierarchy, empowerment, advocacy balance.

Explanation: Recognizing and mitigating unequal power relationships fosters culturally respectful advocacy and shared decision-making.

Example: An advocate ensuring a patient's voice is heard when the clinician dominates the conversation.

Practical application: Structured communication tools that allocate equal speaking time to patients and families.

Challenges: Institutional cultures that reinforce hierarchy, and difficulty reshaping entrenched communication patterns.

### Qualitative Research

Concept: Methodologies that explore experiences, meanings, and cultural contexts through non-numeric data.

Related terms: focus groups, ethnography, narrative analysis.

Explanation: Qualitative insights inform culturally competent advocacy by revealing patient perspectives often missed by quantitative studies.

Example: Conducting focus groups with Somali refugees to understand barriers to mental health services.

Practical application: Advocates use findings to design culturally resonant outreach campaigns.

Challenges: Resource-intensive data collection, ensuring participant confidentiality, and translating findings into actionable policies.

#### Race-Based Medicine

Concept: Clinical practices that use race as a proxy for genetic or physiological differences.

Related terms: race correction, precision medicine, health disparities.

Explanation: Critics argue that race-based approaches can perpetuate stereotypes and overlook individual variability, undermining cultural competence.

Example: Adjusting estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR) based on a patient's self-identified race.

Practical application: Advocates push for evidence-based guidelines that rely on genetic testing rather than race assumptions.

Challenges: Entrenched clinical habits, lack of alternative biomarkers, and resistance from professional societies.

#### Religious Competence

Concept: The ability to understand and respect patients' religious beliefs and practices in health care contexts.

Related terms: spiritual care, faith-based advocacy, cultural humility.

Explanation: Religious competence ensures that advocacy aligns with patients' spiritual values, influencing treatment choices and end-of-life decisions.

Example: Coordinating prayer times for a Muslim patient undergoing dialysis.

Practical application: Advocates develop checklists that prompt clinicians to ask about religious accommodations.

Challenges: Diverse religious practices, potential conflicts with medical recommendations, and limited provider training.

#### Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

Concept: The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age that affect health outcomes.

Related terms: equity, health disparity, community resources.

Explanation: SDOH intersect with cultural factors, shaping patients' access to care, adherence, and overall well-being.

Example: Limited transportation options in a low-income neighborhood affecting appointment attendance.

Practical application: Advocates collaborate with community agencies to address transportation, housing, and food security.

Challenges: Multi-sector coordination, data integration, and sustained funding for interventions.

#### Structural Competence

Concept: The capacity of health professionals to recognize and respond to health inequities rooted in social, economic, and political structures.

Related terms: structural violence, policy advocacy, systemic bias.

Explanation: Advocates with structural competence can address root causes of cultural health disparities

beyond individual interactions.

Example: Identifying how zoning laws limit access to culturally appropriate grocery stores in a minority community.

Practical application: Policy briefs that propose zoning reforms to improve food access.

Challenges: Complex policy environments, limited authority of individual advocates, and need for interdisciplinary expertise.

#### Trauma-Informed Care

Concept: An approach that acknowledges the prevalence of trauma and its impact on health, emphasizing safety, empowerment, and collaboration.

Related terms: cultural safety, resilience, patient dignity.

Explanation: Many culturally diverse patients have histories of collective or intergenerational trauma; integrating trauma-informed principles enhances advocacy effectiveness.

Example: Using gentle language and offering choices to a refugee who has experienced war-related trauma.

Practical application: Advocacy protocols that include trauma screening and culturally sensitive referrals.

Challenges: Balancing trauma sensitivity with urgent medical needs, and ensuring staff are adequately trained.

#### Unconscious Bias

Concept: Implicit attitudes that influence perceptions and actions without conscious awareness.

Related terms: implicit bias, stereotype threat, bias mitigation.

Explanation: Unconscious bias can affect how advocates interpret patient information, prioritize cases, and communicate across cultures.

Example: Assuming a patient from a certain ethnic group is less likely to adhere to treatment.

Practical application: Routine bias reflection exercises and structured decision-making tools that reduce reliance on gut feelings.

Challenges: Difficulty in measuring bias, resistance to acknowledging personal bias, and ensuring sustained behavior change.

#### Value-Sensitive Design

Concept: The integration of cultural values and ethical considerations into health technology and advocacy tools.

Related terms: user-centered design, cultural adaptation, inclusive innovation.

Explanation: Designing patient portals, mobile apps, or decision aids that reflect cultural preferences improves engagement and trust.

Example: A diabetes app that includes culturally specific recipes and health tips.

Practical application: Conducting co-design workshops with community members to tailor digital resources.

Challenges: Diverse cultural expectations, resource limitations for customization, and maintaining data security.

#### Volunteer Advocacy Networks



Concept: Groups of unpaid individuals who provide culturally informed support and navigation assistance.

Related terms: community advocacy, peer support, grassroots mobilization.

Explanation: Volunteers often share cultural backgrounds with patients, enhancing credibility and cultural resonance.

Example: A network of Latina volunteers offering assistance with insurance enrollment for recent immigrants.

Practical application: Training volunteers on confidentiality, advocacy ethics, and cultural competence basics.

Challenges: Volunteer turnover, ensuring consistent quality, and coordinating with formal health systems.

### Health Equity

Concept: The pursuit of the highest possible standard of health for all people, while striving to eliminate disparities that are rooted in social injustice.

Related terms: fairness, justice, disparity reduction.

Explanation: Culturally competent advocacy is a cornerstone of health equity, ensuring that cultural barriers do not impede access to quality care.

Example: Implementing policies that guarantee interpreter services for all patients regardless of payer status.

Practical application: Monitoring equity metrics and reporting disparities to leadership.

Challenges: Systemic inertia, data fragmentation, and competing organizational priorities.

### Implicit Association Test (IAT)

Concept: A psychometric tool that measures the strength of automatic associations between concepts (e.g., race, gender) and attributes (e.g., good, bad).

Related terms: bias assessment, self-awareness, psychological testing.

Explanation: IAT results can reveal hidden biases that affect culturally competent advocacy, prompting targeted training.

Example: An advocate discovers an unconscious preference for patients of a certain ethnicity through the IAT.

Practical application: Incorporating IAT results into personal development plans for advocacy staff.

Challenges: Debate over test validity, potential defensiveness, and translating results into concrete behavior changes.

### Language Access Plan

Concept: A documented strategy that outlines how an organization will provide language services to meet the needs of diverse populations.

Related terms: interpreter services, multilingual resources, compliance.

Explanation: A robust language access plan ensures that cultural and linguistic barriers are systematically addressed in advocacy work.

Example: A hospital's plan that guarantees interpreter availability within 15 minutes for all emergent visits.

Practical application: Advocates audit compliance with the plan and report gaps to administrators.

Challenges: Budget constraints, staffing shortages, and maintaining up-to-date language inventories.

### Multicultural Competence

Concept: The ability to effectively interact with people from multiple cultural backgrounds, recognizing both commonalities and distinct differences.

Related terms: cultural competence, diversity awareness, intercultural skills.

Explanation: Multicultural competence expands beyond single-culture focus, preparing advocates to serve heterogeneous patient populations.

Example: An advocate skilled in navigating both Asian and Latinx cultural norms within the same clinic.

Practical application: Continuous professional development that includes case studies from varied cultural contexts.

Challenges: Risk of superficial coverage, time pressures, and staying current with evolving cultural trends.

### Patient Navigation

Concept: Assistance provided to patients as they move through the health care system, ensuring culturally appropriate support at each step.

Related terms: case management, advocacy liaison, care coordination.

Explanation: Navigators address language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and systemic obstacles that hinder access to care.

Example: A navigator helps a newly arrived refugee schedule appointments, arrange translation, and understand insurance options.

Practical application: Developing culturally specific navigation protocols that incorporate traditional health practices.

Challenges: High caseloads, limited funding, and ensuring navigators are culturally matched to patients.

### Policy Advocacy

Concept: Efforts to influence legislation, regulations, or institutional policies that affect culturally diverse patient populations.

Related terms: lobbying, legislative change, systemic reform.

Explanation: Policy advocacy translates cultural competence insights into broader structural improvements, such as mandating interpreter services.

Example: Campaigning for state legislation that requires culturally competent training for all health care providers.

Practical application: Drafting policy briefs that cite disparity data and propose concrete cultural competence standards.

Challenges: Political resistance, lengthy legislative processes, and aligning advocacy messages with policymakers' priorities.

### Qualitative Data Integration

Concept: The process of incorporating narrative, interview, and observational data into decision-making and advocacy strategies.

Related terms: mixed methods, stakeholder feedback, evidence synthesis.

Explanation: Qualitative insights illuminate cultural nuances that quantitative metrics might overlook, enriching advocacy interventions.

Example: Using patient stories to highlight cultural barriers in a hospital's quality improvement report.

Practical application: Creating dashboards that display both statistical outcomes and patient narrative excerpts.

Challenges: Standardizing qualitative data for reporting, ensuring confidentiality, and balancing anecdotal versus systematic evidence.

### Racial Concordance

Concept: Matching patients with providers of the same racial or ethnic background.

Related terms: representation, cultural matching, patient satisfaction.

Explanation: Concordance can improve communication, trust, and health outcomes, especially when cultural norms differ markedly.

Example: Assigning a Black oncologist to a Black patient with breast cancer.

Practical application: Advocates lobby for recruitment strategies that increase racial diversity among clinicians.

Challenges: Limited pool of concordant providers, potential tokenism, and the need to avoid assuming homogeneity within racial groups.

### Social Justice Lens

Concept: An analytical perspective that examines how power, privilege, and oppression influence health outcomes and access.

Related terms: equity, advocacy, structural analysis.

Explanation: Applying a social justice lens ensures that cultural competence efforts address root causes of inequity, not just surface symptoms.

Example: Recognizing that language barriers are compounded by socioeconomic disadvantage in immigrant communities.

Practical application: Framing advocacy campaigns around rights-based language and systemic reform.

Challenges: Potential politicization, resistance from stakeholders uncomfortable with structural critiques, and resource demands for comprehensive analysis.

### Stakeholder Engagement

Concept: The systematic inclusion of individuals, groups, and organizations with vested interests in health outcomes.

Related terms: community partnership, participatory planning, co-creation.

Explanation: Engaging culturally diverse stakeholders enriches advocacy by incorporating authentic perspectives and building trust.

Example: Holding town-hall meetings with indigenous elders to discuss culturally appropriate mental health services.

Practical application: Establishing advisory boards that represent multiple cultural groups and meet regularly to guide advocacy priorities.

Challenges: Managing divergent expectations, ensuring equitable voice, and preventing tokenistic involvement.

### Systemic Bias

Concept: Institutional policies or practices that unintentionally favor certain cultural groups over others.

Related terms: structural bias, institutional racism, inequitable procedures.

Explanation: Systemic bias can manifest in scheduling, resource allocation, or clinical protocols, undermining culturally competent advocacy.

Example: A hospital's default forms that only capture binary gender options, excluding non-binary patients from appropriate care pathways.

Practical application: Conducting bias audits to identify and rectify systemic inequities.

Challenges: Deeply embedded practices, lack of awareness among leadership, and resistance to change.

### Transcultural Nursing

Concept: A nursing specialty focused on delivering care that respects cultural differences and promotes health across cultures.

Related terms: cultural nursing, holistic care, cultural assessment.

Explanation: Transcultural nursing principles guide advocates in understanding patients' cultural health beliefs and integrating them into care plans.

Example: Using Leininger's Sunrise Model to assess a patient's cultural health practices.

Practical application: Training advocates in cultural assessment tools and incorporating findings into advocacy documentation.

Challenges: Time constraints, need for specialized training, and varying acceptance of cultural models in clinical settings.

### Trust Building

Concept: The process of establishing reliable, respectful, and collaborative relationships between advocates and culturally diverse patients.

Related terms: rapport, credibility, relational ethics.

Explanation: Trust is foundational for effective advocacy; cultural competence enhances trust by honoring patients' identities and experiences.

Example: An advocate consistently uses a patient's preferred name and pronouns, reinforcing respect.

Practical application: Implementing follow-up protocols that demonstrate reliability and cultural sensitivity.

Challenges: Historical mistrust, language barriers, and inconsistent provider behavior.

### Utilization Review

Concept: Evaluation of the appropriateness, necessity, and efficiency of health services provided to patients.

Related terms: case audit, quality assurance, cost-effectiveness.

Explanation: Including cultural considerations in utilization review ensures that services are not denied due

to misunderstood cultural practices.

Example: Approving a traditional healing session as part of a comprehensive care plan for a Native patient.

Practical application: Advocates submit cultural justification documents during review processes.

Challenges: Standardized criteria may not accommodate cultural variations, and reviewers may lack cultural knowledge.

### Virtual Advocacy Platforms

Concept: Online tools and environments that facilitate culturally competent advocacy activities.

Related terms: telehealth, digital outreach, e-advocacy.

Explanation: Virtual platforms can increase access for patients in remote or underserved areas while offering culturally tailored resources.

Example: A web-based portal providing multilingual educational videos about patient rights.

Practical application: Designing culturally responsive user interfaces and ensuring accessibility for diverse populations.

Challenges: Digital divide, language limitations, and ensuring data privacy across cultural contexts.

### Vulnerable Populations

Concept: Groups at heightened risk of poor health outcomes due to social, economic, or cultural disadvantages.

Related terms: marginalized groups, at-risk communities, health inequities.

Explanation: Advocacy must prioritize culturally competent strategies that address the unique barriers faced by vulnerable populations.

Example: Elderly immigrants with limited English proficiency and chronic disease.

Practical application: Tailored case management that incorporates family involvement and interpreter services.

Challenges: Identifying all at-risk groups, avoiding stereotyping, and allocating sufficient resources.

### Workforce Diversity

Concept: The representation of varied cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds among health care staff.

Related terms: inclusion, recruitment, cultural representation.

Explanation: A diverse workforce naturally enhances cultural competence, as staff bring lived experience and language skills to advocacy.

Example: Hiring bilingual community health workers to serve a growing Asian American patient base.

Practical application: Implementing mentorship programs that support underrepresented staff in leadership roles.

Challenges: Recruitment pipelines, retention of minority staff, and ensuring diversity translates into culturally competent practice.