

Battling bias in healthcare interactions: What we can learn from computers, patients, and providers

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Abstract: Healthcare bias – based on patients’ race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and other factors – leads to health inequities. Although such biases are often unintentional and hidden in patient-provider interactions, they undermine trust, rapport, and health outcomes. To address this problem, the “UnBIASED project” aims to make hidden healthcare bias visible. Funded by NIH, this project combines social signal processing – a computational approach that detects subtle nonverbal cues (e.g., interruptions, talk time, gaze, gesture) – with reflective feedback designed in collaboration with patients and providers. By investigating this technology across clinical sites at the University of Washington and University of California San Diego, we are raising providers’ awareness of their communication style and creating innovative training tools that will ultimately address hidden healthcare bias by improving communication between patients and their providers. This talk will describe learnings to date on this multidisciplinary project.

Bio: Andrea Hartzler is an Associate Professor in Biomedical Informatics and Medical Education at the University of Washington. She Co-Directs the Clinical Informatics and Patient-Centered Technologies Program and leads a research program on the human-centered design of collaborative health technology. Her research spans consumer health informatics, human-computer interaction, and digital health equity. She holds a Ph.D. in Biomedical Informatics from the University of Washington. Andrea is passionate about engaging diverse stakeholders in the development and evaluation of patient-centered technology.