Unmasking Healthcare Disparities: The Underreporting of Race, Gender, and Ethnicity Data in Medical Research

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BACKGROUND

2020 was a year marked by change: the COVID-19 pandemic, "Stop AAPI Hate", "Black Lives Matter", the UN Women's highlight of domestic violence: "Shadow Pandemic" .

This time was a call to action, we wanted to see how that extended into medical literature. This study analyzes all publications published by SAGES in the *Surgical Endoscopy*, over the last five years to determine if race, gender, and ethnicity are being adequately reported.

We hypothesized that following the COVID-19 pandemic due to the demand for improved minority representation, there may be increased reporting of gender and race data within scientific publications.

METHODS

All papers published between June 1, 2018, and June 1, 2023, in *Surgical Endoscopy* were analyzed employing a literature review of the PubMed database.

Inclusion criteria:
- primary author be associated with a United States-based institution or hospital
- published between June 1, 2018, and June 1, 2023
- format of a retrospective study, prospective study, or randomized controlled trial (RCT).

Information gathered on each paper:
- month and year of publication
- study type, single-center versus multi-center
- primary author and senior author, affiliated institution
- inclusion of gender reporting
- inclusion of race reporting, demographic breakdown if reported

RESULTS

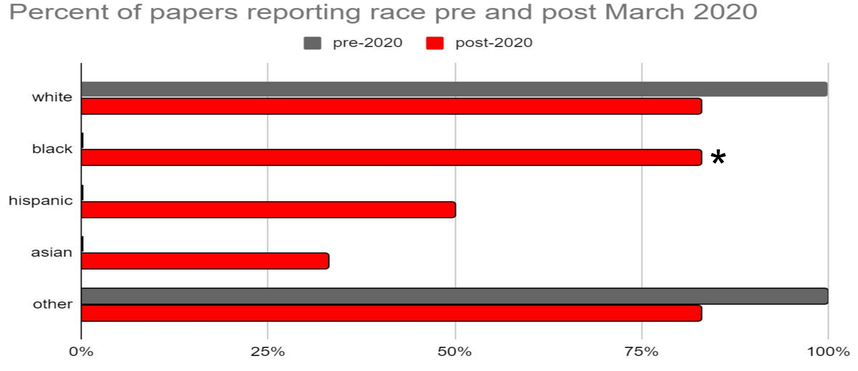
478 *Surgical Endoscopy* papers available on PubMed published within the last 5 years

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43 met inclusion criteria.

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only 8 studies included quantitative race



Only pre/post March 2020 of reporting “black” was significant in t test (p=0.02)

All publications that included race/ethnicity included gender, however, **only 24% of papers that reported gender also published race/ethnicity data. Pre and Post March 2020 no significant difference in reporting gender (p=0.06)**

DISCUSSION

- Less than 1/4 of United States-based studies published in *Surgical Endoscopy* over the last 5 years reported race or ethnicity data within their papers.
- There was a significant increase in the inclusion of "Black" within race reporting when comparing papers published before March 2020 and those published after March 2020.
- Failure to report people who belong to a minority group, continuing to place them into nonrepresentative subgroups such as "Unknown" or "Other".

Bottomline: To improve the way we practice medicine we must be able to analyze complete data regarding diseases, treatment, and educational protocols. Without reporting minority populations, we miss the opportunity to improve medicine for those within these subgroups.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to New York Presbyterian Queens surgery team and Daithi Hoffernan.

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