Focus Incident Reports

In the February 2003 issue of Focus, a publication of the Public Affairs office at Harvard Medical School, launched an experimental column to provide a context for discussion about differences at HMS. Daniel Goodenough, the Takeda professor cell biology and member of the CCCEC, introduced the column:

“This issue of Focus heralds a new experimental column, Incident Report, that will provide a context for discussion about our differences. In each column, real incidents will be presented that have been submitted by members of our community, together with a response. The goal of providing a public forum for discussion and reflection is to develop among ourselves a shared vocabulary and a safe context to engage in learning about why we see each other the way we do. If we take time to understand the lenses through which we view each other, the more thoughtful we will become in caring for each other, our students, and our patients. It is too often the case that we project our frustrations and fears concerning an increasingly complex, sometimes alienating, work environment onto each other, particularly onto those around us about whom we have the least understanding and harbor stereotypes. We have all been carefully taught values in our families and communities, values of beautiful and ugly, special and shameful, desirable and mundane. These values may seem so "normal" that we are blind to the considerable power given to them by the privilege of our professional stature, power that can marginalize and sometimes vilify the values of others. We must seek to undo these inequities.”

“The goal of these discussions is not to shame, blame, or promulgate a politically correct agenda. Rather, it is to normalize conversation about taboo subjects, always in the interest of learning about ourselves and how we can emerge as better professionals. Value is placed on being mindful so that we can professionally monitor our blind spots and projections.”

Resident Mocks Gay Physician
February 21, 2003

A Patient is Not A Thing
September 26, 2003
When Patients are Treated without Respect
March 21, 2003

Humor Belittles Pregnant Medical Student
April 18, 2003

How to Handle ‘Blatant Obnoxious Racism’
May 16, 2003

Resident Ridicules Nurse's Body Size
July 11, 2003

Finding a Good Way to Give Bad News
October 24, 2003

Diagnosing Faith
November 21, 2003

Toward Putting Down The Put-down
January 9, 2004

A Joke As A Cover for Sexism
February 6, 2004

No Place for Us vs. Them in Clinical Care
April 30, 2004