



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Cellular & Physiological Sciences

Faculty of Medicine

REDI (Respect, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) Meeting

Wednesday September 20, 2023

11:00AM - 12:00PM, via Zoom

Present: Dr. Elizabeth Rideout, Dr. Majid Alimohammadi, Shalini Iyer, Dr. Manouchehr Madani

Regrets: Rita Jin

This meeting was called for:

1. Introduction of new member
2. Discuss the results of the survey
3. Discussion on how to approach Faculty / PDFs for the committee membership

1. Introduction of new member

Dr. Alimohammadi announced a new committee member, Dr. Manouchehr Madani. He introduced himself and expressed his interest in learning about diversity and equity in the health science field. Each committee member introduced themselves as well.

2. Discuss the results of the survey

Survey results graphs [here](#) and link to the survey questions [here](#).

Dr. Alimohammadi presented the survey results and his comments on each question. Dr. Rideout suggested discussing common themes across multiple questions and identifying action items.

Q1. The CPS REDI committee is supporting an increase in my knowledge of, and engagement with, EDI practices and initiatives.

Dr. Alimohammadi noted that about 74% of the survey participants, 51 people in total, expressed positivity towards the REDI committee which resulted in an overall favorable response. Dr. Rideout agreed, but also mentioned the low response rate, particularly among postdocs and graduate students. This point should be acknowledged in their final report and the comments should be appended.

Dr. Madani raised a concern that three faculty members selected “strongly disagree”. Given their long-standing service within the department, their opinions hold significant weight. Dr. Rideout added the comments from these individuals to the survey results sheet.

Dr. Alimohammadi emphasized that opinions of all the other employee groups are equally important; however, they did not provide any comments. The committee's goal is to ensure satisfaction among the majority of employees. Although a 74% positive response is acceptable, he believed there's room for improvement and encouraged everyone to pursue better results.

Shalini added her perspective, that she believes most grad students don't know about the committee and how to access certain resources. It needs to be incorporated in orientation and any other events. There was one workshop for the grads and postdocs last year, but the attendance was quite low. Shalini recommended more interactive opportunities to familiarize graduate students and postdocs with the committee and the resources.

Q2. Which activities would be most effective at enhancing your knowledge and/or promoting engagement with REDI initiatives?

Dr. Alimohammadi summarized the responses, indicating that most people prefer to independently organize and lead REDI initiatives within their respective employee groups, as they have a better understanding of their specific needs compared to the committee or the department. In response, Dr. Rideout emphasized the committee's important role in facilitating and supporting these initiatives. She pointed out that the committee can provide assistance by offering resources such as the Equity and Inclusion Office's event planning template and by connecting individuals with the resources they require.

Shalini agreed with having each group host their own events. In the past, a graduate student EDI committee in neuroscience program had an EDI event every month with a guest speaker. Dr. Madani suggested setting up a table at scientific meetings to showcase the REDI committee and our activities to engage with the community. Dr. Alimohammadi agreed and commented that we need to explore more ways to connect with the community.

Q3. Which steps can be taken by the department to promote greater equity, diversity, and/or inclusion in your working environment?

Dr. Alimohammadi pointed out that among all the groups, "providing resources" and "career development opportunities" were consistently either the first or second choices. The third option for both graduate and undergraduate students was "consideration of EDI-related work in performance evaluations." Dr. Rideout added that this was to consider EDI activities in your CV.

Shalini suggested EDI workshop participation can be included in a CV and noted that attending an EDI workshop demonstrates awareness of EDI concepts and proficiency in applying them in a workplace, which makes a valuable addition to a CV.

Dr. Madani recommended online resources and courses that offer certificates upon completion, especially for staff who work from home.

Ayaka proposed an EDI award; some departments has such awards in place for students and trainees. Dr. Alimohammadi agreed with the idea and suggested including staff in this initiative. Dr. Rideout agreed and mentioned that there should be both a staff award and a junior career award. She believed this was a feasible initiative that could be implemented quickly and suggested the criteria and description for these awards be developed in the upcoming meeting or the one following that. Dr. Alimohammadi agreed with this plan.

Q4. Please choose your Top 3 preferred formats for REDI committee communications.

Dr. Alimohammadi summarized that everyone prefers email, followed by newsletter as means of REDI communication. Dr. Rideout suggested a monthly newsletter that could include a summary of the meeting minutes and provide monthly updates and activities/resources. Dr. Alimohammadi responded that the details of the newsletter, such as distribution methods, frequency, and content, should be discussed in upcoming meetings as well.

Q5. I have faced, or witnessed, barriers to equity, diversity and/or inclusion in my interactions with the department.

The survey results indicated that 5 out of 8 undergraduate students have faced, or witnessed barriers to equity, diversity and/or inclusion in interactions with the department. The committee found these numbers to be shocking, especially in contrast to the responses from faculty and staff.

Dr. Madani highlighted that the survey response rate was quite low and those who have EDI issues tend to participate in the survey more actively than others. He emphasized that we should encourage more participation in the next survey.

Dr. Rideout shared a comment regarding this question: There were lectures introducing colonialist ideas, such as thrifty gene hypothesis, that has been completely disproven, but it's still being brought up in the classes. She also mentioned there were more comments with specific examples.

Q6. Please indicate how you prefer to communicate barriers (if any) to equity, diversity and/or inclusion you have faced, or witnessed?

Dr. Alimohammadi noted that everyone except the staff have designated REDI committee as their first choice and the FoM is favourable as well. He also mentioned a positive aspect of everyone feeling at ease to share their EDI concerns with the committee, but he is unsure that the REDI committee is in the position to communicate barriers with people. Dr. Rideout mentioned that it is not currently within the committee's role and is not specified in the terms of reference. However, she suggested the committee providing assistance by connecting people with the appropriate resources and guidance on how to raise concerns effectively. She recommended creating 'decision trees' on the website for each employee group, offering guidance on how to report concerns in the most suitable manner. Dr. Alimohammadi agreed with this approach.