

## Symposium - Education Initiative on Unconscious Bias in Health Care

**September 1st, 2026, Bern**

University of Bern, Hochschulstrasse 4, 3012 Bern (Main Building), Rooms 214/215

>> [Itinerary](#)

Free admission; registration required

>> [Additional information and registration](#)

### Program

#### Morning

09:00 – 09:30 **Arrival, registration, and coffee**

09:30 – 09:45 **Opening and welcome remarks on unconscious bias, inequity and inequality in health care**

*Carole Clair, Unisanté; Andreas Gerber-Grote, ZHAW*

09:45 – 10:15 **Current Approaches to Teaching Unconscious Bias : Results from a Swiss Survey of Health Professions Programmes**

*Ursula Meidert, ZHAW; Eléonore Crunchant, Unisanté*

This presentation reports findings from a national survey on the integration of unconscious bias into health professions education in Switzerland.

It provides an overview of current curricular approaches across medical faculties and at Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences.

10:15 – 10:55 **Managing Socially and Communicatively Complex Care Situations in Peripartum Care : Implications for Health Equity**

*Michael Gemperle, ZHAW*

Drawing on findings from a Swiss study on health equity in peripartum care, this presentation examines how healthcare organisations and professionals manage socially and communicatively complex care situations.

It highlights how such situations are identified, classified and addressed in routine care, and discusses how these processes shape opportunities for equitable care and contribute to understanding unequal treatment.

10:55 - 11:20 *Coffee Break*

11:20 – 12:00 **Beyond good intentions: The Bias We Carry, the Competence We Need and Where We Stand**

*Susan Schärli-Lim, ZHAW*

Intercultural competence is a way to widen students' perspectives in today's multicultural world and health care systems.

This presentation will focus on the past, present and future of the need for intercultural competence.

12:00 - 13:15 *Lunch Break (Lunch will be provided)*

*Afternoon*

13:15 – 14:30 **Parallel Workshop Session I**

**Workshop 1 : Connect Across Differences: UNESCO Story Circles Workshop**  
*Susan Schärli-Lim, ZHAW*

UNESCO Story Circles is an experiential methodology designed to foster intercultural competence, empathy, and understanding through guided small-group dialogue. Used around the world—from classrooms to conflict zones—it helps build bridges between diverse perspectives. Through sharing stories, listening, and reflection, participants learn to approach different worldviews with curiosity, question their own assumptions, and recognise the shared humanity across cultural differences.

**Workshop 2 : Virtual Patients for Implicit Bias Training**  
*Sonja Merten, Swiss TPH; Stefanie Brown, Kalaidos FH, Careum*

Virtual patients offer new opportunities to simulate complex clinical and social encounters that may be difficult to reproduce in traditional teaching settings. This workshop will explore how virtual patients can support experiential learning, reflection on implicit bias and cultural stereotypes, and the development of cultural humility among future healthcare professionals.

**Workshop 3 : Hidden Bias, Real Impact : Understanding Unconscious Bias from the Patient Perspective**  
*Corine Mouton Dorey, UZH; Dirkje Swennen, UZH*

Unconscious biases can influence healthcare interactions in ways that affect communication, trust, decision-making, and health outcomes. Using real-life patient narratives from the DIPEX methodology, this interactive workshop invites participants to reflect on how hidden assumptions shape healthcare encounters and to explore strategies for more equitable and patient-centred care.

**Workshop 4 : Reflectivity as a pedagogical approach to tackle unconscious bias**  
*Joëlle Schwarz, and Eléonore Crunchant, Unisanté; Baptiste Peddrizzini and Noëllie Genre, Unisanté; Brigitte Wehrli and Annanora Huber Bassetti, SUPSI*

This workshop will explore different methods and approaches to teaching reflexivity in medical and physiotherapy education at Unisanté and SUPSI. We will discuss the importance of promoting reflexive approaches in order to address implicit biases that occur in healthcare practices.

14:30 – 14:45 *Coffee Break*

14:45 – 16:00 **Parallel Workshop Session II** (identical Workshops 1-4)

16:00 – 16:30 **Wrap up and way forward**  
*Andreas Gerber-Grote, ZHAW; Joëlle Schwarz, Unisanté; Sonja Merten, SwissTPH*

16:30 *Aperitif*