

Medical College of Wisconsin Research Shows Increasing Religious Discrimination Against Muslim Physicians in U.S.

Jan 18, 2023

Milwaukee, Jan. 4, 2022 – In a study published this month in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, researchers from the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) found many American Muslim clinicians encounter religious discrimination in the workplace, and that these experiences appear to be on the rise.

“[Religious Identity Discrimination in the Physician Workforce](#)” is the culmination of two national surveys of Muslim clinicians in the United States – one in 2013 and another in 2021. While outcomes varied in each survey, one notable similarity is that over half the participants reported struggling to find time to pray at work in both 2013 and 2021.

[Aasim I. Padela, MD, MSc](#), professor with tenure of [Emergency Medicine, Bioethics and the Medical Humanities](#) at MCW, served as lead researcher on the study.

“Workplace discrimination faced by Muslim physicians leads to job turnover, job dissatisfaction and career changes. People are leaving the profession and becoming disenfranchised by medicine,” Dr. Padela said. “What our research is telling us is that this phenomenon continues to occur and increase.”

According to various estimates, Muslim Americans comprise more than 5 percent of the physician workforce. In recent decades, anti-Muslim hate crimes have become more common, media narratives have portrayed Muslims in a negative manner, and political conversations have placed the U.S. Muslim community under greater scrutiny. Despite national efforts to increase workforce diversity, physicians from minority populations remain underrepresented and face obstacles in negotiating their professional and personal identities. Workplace discrimination not only negatively impacts career advancement and the well-being of the at-risk physician, but it leads to adverse consequences for patient care and healthcare equity.

Dr. Padela and his team at the Initiative on Islam and Medicine [led a webinar](#) in October in collaboration with Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding to share findings from this study and over a decade of research on Muslim American physicians. The webinar also discussed practical ways for advancing healthcare workforce equity and build cultures of inclusive excellence in healthcare systems. A [policy report](#) (PDF) accompanied the webinar.

“The policy report lays out a guide of what Muslim physicians want and how policies can be made around those points,” Dr. Padela said. “We are trying to translate our research findings into practical awareness for those in power and to better serve the next generation of students who are coming through.”

In addition to Dr. Padela, other MCW researchers from the Department of Emergency Medicine who authored the study are Benish Baqai, BS; Laila Azam, PhD, MBA; Omar Davila, MPH; and Sohad Murrar, PhD.

[View the full manuscript in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*](#)

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