

Human Biological Variation in Anatomy Textbooks: The Role of Ancestry

Goran Štrkalj^{1,2} and Veli Solyali¹

1. Department of Chiropractic, Macquarie University, Sydney NSW 2109, Australia

*2. Institute for Human Evolution, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg,
Wits 2050, South Africa*

KEYWORDS Medical Education. Anatomy. Human Variation. Ancestry. "Race"

ABSTRACT Humans vary biologically at different levels: individually, according to sex, age and ancestry. The first three levels are usually competently accounted for in medical curriculum, but this does not seem to be the case with the fourth one. This study focuses on human biological variation due to differences in ancestry and the way it is dealt with in anatomy textbooks. It examines the treatment of human biological variation (ancestry) in current anatomy textbooks written in English, through the content analysis. The results suggest that this type of human variation is either not accounted for or approached only superficially and in an outdated manner. In light of the current debate on the validity of "race" in medical discourse, it is recommended that more adequate and up to date accounts on human variation should be introduced in anatomy textbooks.