# Not So Black and White: Variation in Modified Finnegan Scoring UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Authors have no financial relationships to disclose.



# Background

- Racial bias is prevalent in healthcare with harmful effects on both adult and pediatric patients
- Neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome (NOWS) arises from in utero exposure to drugs with subsequent withdrawal which is scored by the Modified Finnegan Score (MFS)
- A previous study showed that black infants received fewer opiates than white infants

# Objectives

Determine if implicit bias among nurses leads to differences in MFS between black and white infants

# Study Design and Population

Population: nurses recruited from tertiary NICU

Three Clinical Vignettes AND Randomized Group 2. White Infant Group 1. Black Infant OR N=19 N=28

Primary outcome: Mean MFS scores Secondary outcome: Proportion with MFS ≥9

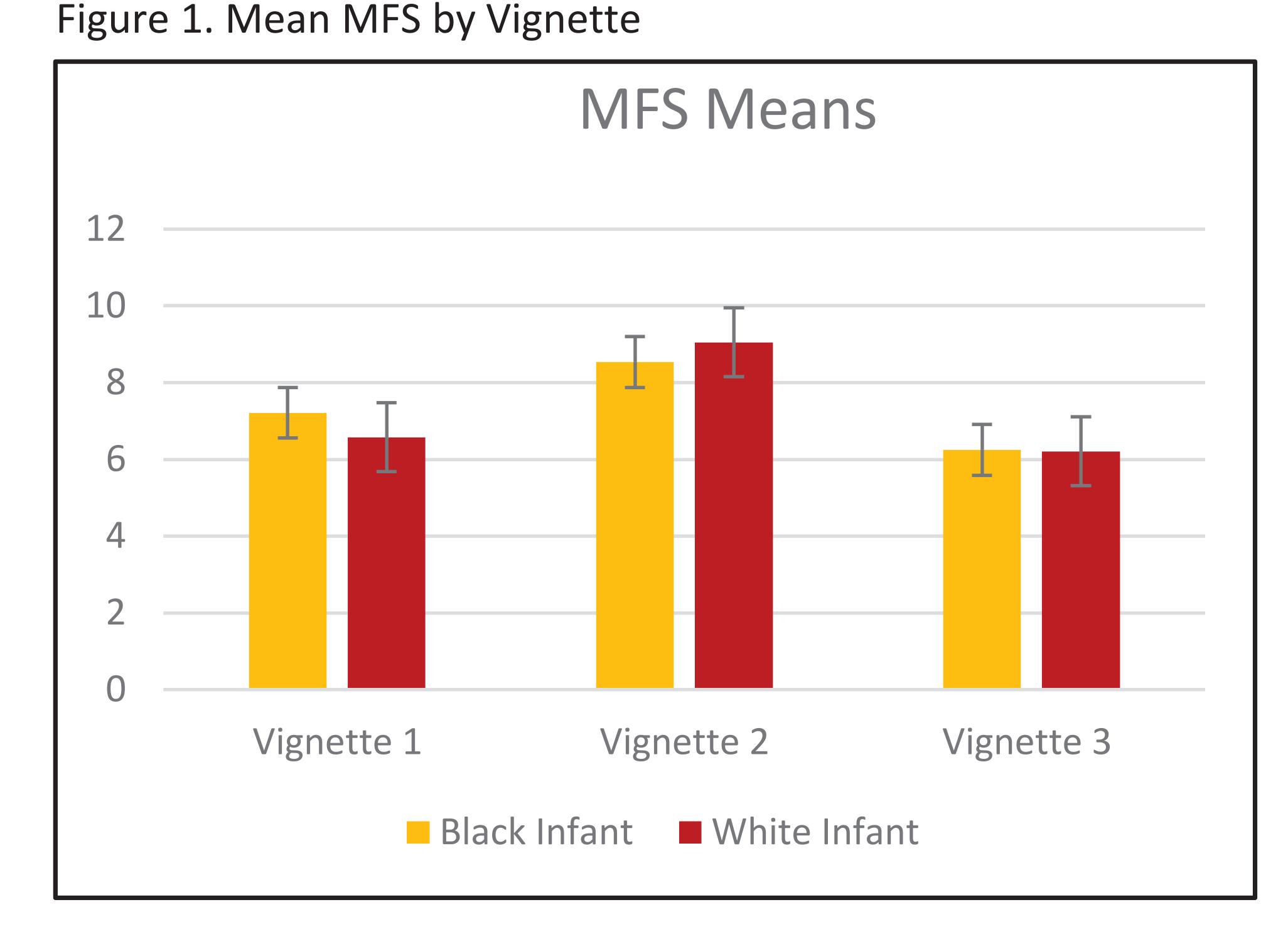
Table 1. Demographic data

Characteristics	N=47 (%)
Gender	
Female	46 (97.9)
Age (years)	
<25	8 (17)
25-35	25 (53.2)
36-45	6 (12.8)
>46-55	8 (17)
Experience (years)	
<2	9 (19.1)
2-5	13 (27.7)
6-10	12 (25.5)
>11	13 (27.7)
Race/Ethnicity	
White	38 (80.9)
Black	4 (8.5)

No significant difference between groups

Results

- For vignette 2, the mean MFS for the white infants was 9.05 (standard deviation [SD] = 1.22) and for the black infants was 8.54 (SD = 1.75, P = 0.058)
- For vignette 2, the proportion of MFS ≥9 was 79% of white infants and 54% of black infants (P =0.076).



# Instrument Design

- Each vignette depicted a different maternal description that would result in neonatal withdrawal
- Vignette 1 depicts an 18-year-old with signs of current intoxication, no prenatal care, polysubstance abuse
- Vignette 2 depicts a 34-year-old with a history of IV drug abuse but good prenatal care on methadone
- Vignette 3 depicts a 28-year-old in a methadone program but also screens positive for THC

# Conclusions

- Based on the preliminary data there was no significant difference in MFS
- Nonsignificant trend toward lower withdrawal scores for black infants with more serious NOWS symptoms

## **Future Directions**

 Continue data collection and analysis based on nursing demographic factors