



**Sumi M. Sexton, MD**, *American Family Physician*; **Caroline R. Richardson, MD**, *Annals of Family Medicine*; **Sarina B. Schrager, MD, MS**, *FPM*; **Marjorie A. Bowman, MD**, *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*; **John Hickner, MD, MSc**, *The Journal of Family Practice*; **Christopher P. Morley, PhD, MA**, *PRiMER*; **Timothy F. Mott, MD**, *FPiNEvidence Based Practice*; **Nicholas Pimlott, MD, PhD**, *Canadian Family Physician*; **John W. Saultz, MD**, *Family Medicine*; **Barry D. Weiss, MD**, *FP Essentials*

Published online October 15, 2020

doi: 10.12788/jfp.0088

# Systemic Racism and Health Disparities: A Statement from Editors of Family Medicine Journals

**T**he year 2020 was marked by historic protests across the United States and the globe sparked by the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and so many other Black people. The protests heightened awareness of racism as a public health crisis and triggered an antiracism movement. Racism is a pervasive and systemic issue that has profound adverse effects on health.<sup>1,2</sup> Racism is associated with poorer mental and physical health outcomes and negative patient experiences in the health care system.<sup>3,4</sup> As evidenced by the current coronavirus pandemic, race is a sociopolitical construct that continues to disadvantage

**Racism is a pervasive and systemic issue that has profound adverse effects on health.**

Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other People of Color.<sup>5,6,7,8</sup> The association between racism and adverse health outcomes has been discussed for decades in the medical literature, including the family medicine literature. Today there is a renewed call to action for family medicine, a specialty that emerged as a counterculture to reform mainstream medicine,<sup>9</sup> to both confront

systemic racism and eliminate health disparities. This effort will require collaboration, commitment, education, and transformative conversations around racism, health inequity, and advocacy so that we can better serve our patients and our communities.

The editors of several North American family medicine publications have come together to address this call to action and share resources on racism across our readerships. We acknowledge those members of the family medicine scholar community who have been fighting for equity consistent with the Black Lives Matter movement by writing about racism, health inequities, and personal experiences of practicing as Black family physicians. While we recognize that much more work is needed, we want to amplify these voices. We have compiled a bibliography of scholarship generated by the family medicine community on the topic of racism in medicine.

The collection can be accessed here: <https://www.annfammed.org/content/shared-bibliography-systemic-racism-and-health-disparities>.

While this list is likely not complete, it does include over 250 published manuscripts and demonstrates expertise as well as a commitment to addressing these

#### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**JOHN HICKNER, MD, MSc**  
Professor Emeritus  
Michigan State University  
College of Human Medicine

#### ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**RICHARD P. USATINE, MD**  
University of Texas Health  
at San Antonio (Photo Rounds)

#### ASSISTANT EDITORS

**DOUG CAMPOS-OUTCALT, MD, MPA**  
University of Arizona

**RICK GUTHMANN, MD, MPH**  
Advocate Illinois Masonic Family Medicine  
Residency, Chicago

**ROBERT B. KELLY, MD, MS**  
Fairview Hospital, a Cleveland Clinic hospital

**GARY KELSBERG, MD, FAAFP**  
University of Washington, Renton

**COREY LYON, DO**  
University of Colorado, Denver

**KATE ROWLAND, MD, MS**  
Rush-Copley Medical Center, Chicago

**E. CHRIS VINCENT, MD**  
University of Washington, Seattle

#### EDITORIAL BOARD

**FREDERICK CHEN, MD, MPH**  
University of Washington, Seattle

**JEFFREY T. KIRCHNER, DO, FAAFP, AAHIVS**  
Penn Medicine/Lancaster General Hospital, PA

**TRACY MAHVAN, PHARM D**  
University of Wyoming, Laramie

**MICHAEL MENDOZA, MD, MPH, MS, FAAFP**  
University of Rochester, NY

**FRED MISER, MD, MA**  
The Ohio State University, Columbus

**KEVIN PETERSON, MD, MPH**  
University of Minnesota, St. Paul

**MICHAEL RADDOCK, MD**  
The MetroHealth System, Cleveland, OH

**MICHELLE ROETT, MD, MPH, FAAFP, CPE**  
Georgetown University Medical Center,  
Washington, DC

**KATE ROWLAND, MD, MS**  
Rush-Copley Medical Center, Chicago

**LINDA SPEER, MD**  
University of Toledo, OH

#### DIRECT INQUIRIES TO:

Frontline Medical Communications  
7 Century Drive, Suite 302  
Parsippany, NJ 07054  
Telephone: (973) 206-3434  
Fax: (973) 206-9378

**>**  
 We have a unique responsibility and opportunity to educate and continue the conversation about institutional racism, health inequities, and antiracism in medicine.

complex issues. For example, in 2016, Dr. J. Nwando Olayiwola, chair of the Department of Family Medicine at Ohio State University, wrote an essay on her experiences taking care of patients as a Black family physician.<sup>10</sup> In January of 2019, *Family Medicine* published an entire issue devoted to racism in education and training.<sup>11</sup> Dr. Eduardo Medina, a family physician and public health scholar, co-authored a call to action in 2016 for health professionals to dismantle structural racism and support Black lives to achieve health equity. His recent 2020 article builds on that theme and describes the disproportionate deaths of Black people due to racial injustice and the COVID-19 pandemic as converging public health emergencies.<sup>12,13</sup> In the wake of these emergencies a fundamental transformation is warranted, and family physicians can play a key role.

We, the editors of family medicine journals, commit to actively examine the effects of racism on society and health and to take action to eliminate structural racism in our editorial processes. As an intellectual home for our profession, we have a unique responsibility and opportunity to educate and continue the conversation about institutional racism, health inequities, and antiracism in medicine. We will take immediate steps to enact tangible advances on these fronts. We will encourage and mentor authors from groups underrepresented in medicine. We will ensure that content includes an emphasis on cultural humility, diversity and inclusion, implicit bias, and the impact of racism on medicine and health. We will recruit editors and editorial board members from groups underrepresented in medicine. We will encourage collaboration and accountability within our specialty to confront systemic racism through content and processes in all of our individual publications. We recognize that these are small steps in an ongoing process of active antiracism, but we believe these steps are crucial. As editors in family medicine, we are committed to progress toward equity and justice. ●

**Simultaneously published in** *American Family Physician*, *Annals of Family Medicine*, *Canadian Family Physician*, *Family Medicine*, *FP Essentials*, *FPIN/Evidence Based Practice*, *FPM*, *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*, *The Journal of Family Practice*, and *PRiMER*.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The authors thank Renee Crichlow, MD, Byron Jasper, MD, MPH, and Victoria Murrain, DO, for their insightful comments on this editorial.

**REFERENCES**

1. Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Understanding and Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care, Smedley BD, Stith AY, Nelson AR, eds. *Unequal treatment: confronting racial and ethnic disparities in health care*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press; 2003.
2. Bailey ZD, Krieger N, Agénor M, Graves J, Linos N, Bassett MT. Structural racism and health inequities in the USA: evidence and interventions. *Lancet*. 2017;389(10077):1453-1463.
3. Ben J, Cormack D, Harris R, Paradies Y. Racism and health service utilisation: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS One*. 2017;12(12):e0189900.
4. Paradies Y, Ben J, Denson N, et al. Racism as a determinant of health: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS One*. 2015;10(9):e0138511.
5. American Academy of Family Physicians. Institutional racism in the health care system. Published 2019. Accessed Sept. 15, 2020. <https://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/institutional-racism.html>
6. Yaya S, Yeboah H, Charles CH, Otu A, Labonte R. Ethnic and racial disparities in COVID-19-related deaths: counting the trees, hiding the forest. *BMJ Glob Health*. 2020;5(6):e002913.
7. Egede LE, Walker RJ. Structural Racism, Social Risk Factors, and Covid-19 — A Dangerous Convergence for Black Americans [published online ahead of print, 2020 Jul 22]. *N Engl J Med*. 2020;10.1056/NEJMp2023616.
8. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Health equity considerations and racial and ethnic minority groups. Updated July 24, 2020. Accessed Sept. 15, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html>
9. Stephens GG. Family medicine as counterculture. *Fam Med*. 1989;21(2):103-109.
10. Olayiwola JN. Racism in medicine: shifting the power. *Ann Fam Med*. 2016;14(3):267-269. <https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.1932>.
11. Saultz J, ed. Racism. *Fam Med*. 2019;51(1, theme issue):1-66.
12. Hardeman RR, Medina EM, Kozhimannil KB. Structural racism and supporting black lives - the role of health professionals. *N Engl J Med*. 2016;375(22):2113-2115. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMp1609535>.
13. Hardeman RR, Medina EM, Boyd RW. Stolen breaths. *N Engl J Med*. 2020;383(3):197-199. 10.1056/NEJMp2021072.



Visit us @ [mdedge.com/familymedicine](https://mdedge.com/familymedicine)

THE JOURNAL OF  
**FAMILY  
 PRACTICE**

## Systemic racism: An editor's note

This month's editorial was jointly written by the editors of 10 prominent family medicine publications, including *JFP*, and is being published simultaneously in all 10 publications. In addition to this statement, each editor has developed action steps for their respective journals. At *JFP*, we plan to take the steps detailed here to help eliminate systemic racism.

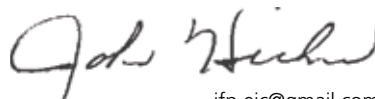
We will:

- continue to seek Black, Latino, and Native American physicians to serve on the *JFP* editorial advisory board.
- solicit manuscripts from these underrepresented groups of physicians.
- recruit peer reviewers from underrepresented communities.
- re-evaluate the thoroughness of manuscripts; where there are racial or ethnic differences in presentation of diseases or treatment outcomes, we will ensure that these differences are highlighted.

If you are interested in helping us to achieve these goals, I encourage you to contact me at [jfp.eic@gmail.com](mailto:jfp.eic@gmail.com).

We must all band together to eliminate disparities and biases in medical education and medical care so that all people receive the same high standard of respect and care that every human being deserves.

**JFP**



[jfp.eic@gmail.com](mailto:jfp.eic@gmail.com)



**John Hickner, MD, MSc**  
Editor-in-Chief

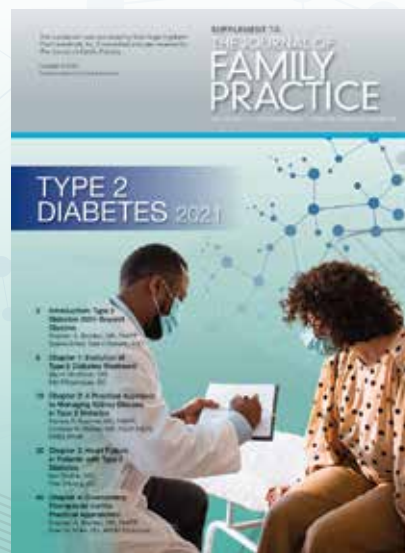
doi: 10.12788/fjp.0136

This supplement was sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. It was edited and peer reviewed by *The Journal of Family Practice*.

# Type 2 Diabetes 2021

The management of type 2 diabetes (T2D) has changed substantially over the last several decades. Standard practices have moved away from the glucocentric approach of T2D management into an era in which the interplay among T2D, obesity, atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, heart failure, and chronic kidney disease is increasingly recognized.

This supplement to *The Journal of Family Practice* brings together key updates in the field of T2D to help physicians care for patients who have not only T2D, but other interrelated diseases.



This supplement can be found at [www.mdedge.com/T2D2021](http://www.mdedge.com/T2D2021).