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AAMC Statement on Police Brutality and Racism in America and Their Impact on Health

JUNE 1, 2020

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David J. Skorton, MD, president and CEO of the AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) and David A. Acosta, MD, AAMC chief diversity and inclusion officer, released the following statement:

“For too long, racism has been an ugly, destructive mark on America’s soul. Throughout our country’s history, racism has affected every aspect of our collective national life—from education to opportunity, personal safety to community stability, to the health of people in our cities large and small, and in rural America.

Over the past three months, the coronavirus pandemic has laid bare the racial health inequities harming our Black communities, exposing the structures, systems, and policies that create social and economic conditions that lead to health disparities, poor health outcomes, and lower life expectancy.

Now, the brutal and shocking deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery have shaken our nation to its core and once again tragically demonstrated the everyday danger of being Black in America. Police brutality is a striking demonstration of the legacy racism has had in our society over decades. This violence has eroded trust of the police within Black and other communities of color who are consistently victims of marginalization, focused oppression, racial profiling, and egregious acts of discrimination.

Our country must unite to combat and dismantle racism and discrimination in all its forms and denounce race-related violence, including police brutality. Enough is enough.

As healers and educators of the next generation of physicians and scientists, the people of America’s medical schools and teaching hospitals bear the responsibility to ameliorate factors that negatively affect the health of our patients and communities: poverty, education, access to transportation, healthy food, and health care.

Racism is antithetical to the oaths and moral responsibilities we accepted as health professionals who have dedicated our lives to advancing the health of all, especially those who live in vulnerable communities.

As leaders of anchor institutions in our communities, academic medicine's physicians, educators, hospital leaders, faculty, researchers, learners, and staff must lead by example and take bold action in partnership with the communities we serve:

- We must acknowledge and speak out against all forms of racism, discrimination, and bias in our environments in our institutions, communities, and society.
- We must stand in solidarity with the Black community and speak out against unjust and inhumane incidents of violence.
- We must demonstrate empathy and compassion and acknowledge the pain and grief that the families and the communities of these victims are experiencing.
- We must take the lead in educating ourselves and others to address these issues head-on.
- We must be deliberate and partner with local communities, public health agencies, and municipal governments to dismantle structural racism and end police brutality.
- We must employ anti-racist and unconscious bias training and engage in interracial dialogues that will dispel the misrepresentations that dehumanize our Black community members and other marginalized groups.
- We must move from rhetoric to action to eliminate the inequities in our care, research, and education of tomorrow's doctors.

The AAMC stands against racism and hate in all its forms, and we call on academic medicine to stand together on this issue. We are committed to harnessing all of our resources to catalyze meaningful and lasting solutions. We can no longer be bystanders. We must not be silent. But while our solidarity is necessary, it is not sufficient. Together, and in partnership with the communities we serve, we must work together to heal our nation.”

The Association of American Medical Colleges is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health care through innovative medical education, cutting-edge patient care, and groundbreaking medical research. Its members comprise all 155 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, including 51 Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 80 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC serves the leaders of America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and their 173,000 faculty members, 89,000 medical students, 129,000 resident physicians, and more than 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences. Additional information about the AAMC and its member medical schools and teaching hospitals is available at www.aamc.org.