A Historical Perspective of Systemic Racism in Medical Education

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Disclosure

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Has no relationships with any entity producing, marketing, re-selling, or distributing health care goods or services consumed by, or used on patients.
Objectives

1. To understand the history of how systemic racism has been deeply-rooted in medical education

2. To understand how pivotal the Flexner Report was in determining the fate of medical education for Black physicians

3. To understand the cultural barriers of Black patients regarding their perception of trust in health care

Contents

► Medical Environment (19th century)
► Black Medical School Education (Jim Crow Era)
► Academic Reform & Flexner Report
► Post Graduate Education
► Continuing Medical Education
► Integration
► Today’s Landscape
Systemic Racism

Systemic racism = polices and practices entrenched in established institutions, which results in the exclusion or promotion of designated groups.

Medical Environment

James McCune Smith, MD
In the late 19th century, most Black medical colleges were founded by northern missionaries.

The most successful Black medical colleges in the late 19th century:
- Howard University Medical School – Washington, DC
- Meharry Medical College – Nashville, TN
- Leonard Medical School – Raleigh, NC (closed 1918)
- New Orleans (Flint) Medical College – New Orleans, LA (closed 1911)

Regardless of affiliation, purpose, or eventual success, most Black medical schools faced three common barriers:
- Catering to students who were ill-prepared for medical education
- Students who could not afford even modest tuition fees
- Limited financial stability to provide facilities and hire faculty
Academic Reform of Medical Education

- There was a prompt for reform for all U.S. medical schools
- AMA created the Council on Medical Education in 1904
- The Council on Medical Education surveyed the nation’s 161 medical schools and classified as:
Academic Reform of Medical Education

Abraham Flexner

Flexner Report

- *Medical Education in the U.S. and Canada* released in 1910:
  - Concluded too many were focused on producing physicians in high numbers instead of high quality
  - Proposed elimination of all proprietary & poorly financed medical schools
  - Advised all schools become affiliated with a university, so scientific education could begin at the undergraduate level
  - Advised all schools to hire full time faculty
  - Recommended a requirement at least 2 years of college education prior to admission
Flexner Report

Only Howard (A) and Meharry (B) were “worthy of developing”

Meharry was credible, but deficient in clinical facilities and limited clinical privileges

Leonard (B) was clean, but lacked clinical facilities that were hardly more than nominal

Flexner Report – Oregon Schools

General Considerations

Neither of these schools has either resources or ideals; there is no justification for their existence. The entire coast is oversupplied with doctors by immigration; unless something better can be made than can be thus readily obtained, the state will do well to let the field lie fallow.
Flexner Report - Impact

- With the closing of 5 Black medical colleges, the number of Black physicians remained stagnant through the early 1940’s.

- “Flexner Report was a formative document that altered, shaped, and defined the future of medical education and the Black medical experience in the U.S. Created in a time of blatant Black subordination and discrimination, the Flexner Report was well-intentioned, but certainly had racial implications.”

Postgraduate Education
Postgraduate Education - Internship

1915 - 1st U.S. medical school to require an internship
1920 - internship was firmly established as a part of medical education
1923 - enough internships nationally to accommodate all the medical graduates
Until 1936 - enough internships available to accommodate the Black medical graduates
1956 - the majority of Howard and Meharry graduates completed internships at predominantly White hospitals

Postgraduate Education – “Black Hospitals”

- “Black hospitals” - facilities that catered primarily or exclusively to Black patients, but they may NOT have been owned or managed by Blacks

- Many White administrators saw Black patients as expendable and saw “Black hospitals” as a perfect training ground of medical science for White physicians.
Black Iatrophobia

- Tuskegee experiment (Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male)
- Eugenic sterilization / “Mississippi appendectomy”
- Experimental procedures & surgeries on Black patients
- Grave robbing
- No consent required

Postgraduate Education - Residency

- In 1927, The AMA’s Council of Medical Education published its first list of approved residency programs
- Black hospitals were without facilities to train specialists and White hospitals refused to admit Black physicians to their programs
Continuing Medical Education

Continuing Education – Daniel Hale Williams, MD
Integration
Integration

- David Peck, MD

- Rebecca Lee Crumpler, MD

Integration

Edith M. Irby Jones, MD
Currently there are 4 predominantly Black medical schools:

- Howard University, 1868 – Washington, DC
- Meharry Medical College, 1876 – Nashville, TN
- Charles R. Drew University, 1966 – Los Angeles, CA
- Morehouse Medical School, 1975 – Atlanta GA
Figure 6. Percentage of acceptees to U.S. medical schools by race/ethnicity (alone), academic year 2018–2019.

Click on legend item below to add or remove a section from the report.
- American Indian or Alaska Native (14)
- Asian (9,940)
- Black or African American (15,306)
- Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish Origin (1,692)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (3)
- Non-U.S. Citizen or Nonpermanent Resident (555)
- Other (190)
- Unknown Race/Ethnicity (408)
- White (11,398)

Figure 18. Percentage of all active physicians by race/ethnicity, 2018.

Click on legend item below to add or remove a section from the report.
- American Indian or Alaska Native (2,370)
- Asian (157,015)
- Black or African American (45,534)
- Hispanic (33,328)
- Multiple Race, Non-Hispanic (8,912)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (941)
- Other (7,773)
- Unknown (120,144)
- White (1,680,594)
Current Medical Education Landscape

No physician is racist, so how can there be structural racism in health care? An explanation of the idea by doctors for doctors in this user-friendly podcast from the great @DrKatzNYCHH and @ehlJAMA!

Structural Racism for Doctors—What Is It?
edhub.ama-assn.org

8:00 a.m. · 24 Feb. 21 · Sprinklr

Thank You for Your Attention

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS