

Ending Disparities e-Letter

December 2009

Dear Reader,

In one of her first public statements as the nation's new Surgeon General, Regina Benjamin, MD has called for an increase in more minorities in medicine (see article 1). We applaud her for wasting no time in addressing one of the root causes of health care disparities in the U.S.



In addition to more minority physicians, we also need to make sure that all physicians are adequately trained in cultural competence. A new survey of Connecticut physicians (article 2) shows that we have miles to go before we sleep.

Be sure to forward this and future editions of the *Ending Disparities e-Letter* to colleagues interested in these issues, and provide them the [link to subscribe](#).

Also, read [past issues of the e-Letter](#).

Finally, be sure to monitor the [AMA's Eliminating Health Disparities Web site](#) for the latest news and updates:

As always, we welcome your [thoughts and feedback](#).

Best Regards,
Sonja Boone, MD, Director
Physician Health and Healthcare Disparities

PS: This *e-Letter* is distributed free each month as a service to those working to eliminate disparities in health care. Physicians: Help support this publication. Are you a member of the American Medical Association? If so, thank you! If not, please [join or renew your membership](#) now.

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1. Surgeon General issues call for more minority doctors

The new U.S. Surgeon General, Regina Benjamin, MD, urged the nation to accelerate efforts to increase the number of minorities in medicine at a speech during the Third Annual Conference on Health Disparities in Atlanta.

Dr. Benjamin, noting that the proportion of minority physicians is the same as it was a century ago (six percent), said, "There's something wrong with that" (*Associated Press*, Dec. 3).

2. Survey highlights gaps in physicians' cultural competence training

A newly released survey of physicians in Connecticut found that only 38 percent received cultural diversity education in medical school or residency, and 70 percent were not aware of available educational programs to help them address disparities.

"The results of our survey tell a sobering story about our ability to communicate with patients, which is the foundation of the physician-patient relationship," said Kathleen A. LaVorgna, MD, president of Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS), which released the survey. "The good news is that we can have an immediate impact on this situation by providing the kind of credible cultural awareness education physicians want and need."

3. How might health system reform affect racial/ethnic minorities?

As for all Americans, the health reform legislation under consideration in Congress is likely to have a significant impact on people of color.

A new issue brief from the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) looks at specific provisions of the proposed legislation that focus on health disparities

Another KFF brief of note, "The Role of Health Coverage for Communities of Color," examines variations in health coverage by race and ethnicity.

4. Save the dates: Upcoming meetings/conferences related to ending disparities

- Health Care Transformation to Increase Prevention and Health Promotion for the Hispanic Community
14th Annual Conference
National Hispanic Medical Association
March 25-28, 2010, Washington, DC

This conference will focus on innovation and cultural competence in health care delivery, medical research, medical education, Federal policy, and private sector programs affecting the health of Hispanics.

- Commission to End Health Care Disparities
April 9-10, 2010, Washington, DC

The theme of the spring 2010 Meeting is "The Interdisciplinary Approach to End Health Care Disparities and its Relationship to Patient-Centered Care and the Medical Home." Learn more about the Commission.

5. Apply for minority fellowship to provide care to patients with HIV

The HIV Medical Association is accepting applications for its minority clinical fellowship program, which seeks to increase the number of African American and Latino physicians with the expertise to provide clinical care to patients with HIV in the communities most affected by HIV disease.

Two one-year fellowships are awarded annually, to one African American physician and one Latino physician interested in

pursuing a career in HIV medicine in the U.S.

The award includes a \$60,000 stipend plus funding to support benefits for one year. Applications are being accepted for the year beginning July 1, 2010. The application deadline is Feb. 12, 2010.

6. Apply for fellowship in minority health policy

The Commonwealth Fund/Harvard University Fellowship in Minority Health Policy is accepting applications for the 2010-2011 cycle. This full-time program is designed to create physician leaders who will pursue careers in minority health and health policy. Five one-year, degree-granting fellowships will be awarded. Applications are due Jan. 4, 2010.

7. New health disparities video and PowerPoint presentation available

An online educational video and PowerPoint presentation for health professionals, from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the George Washington University Medical Center, explores ways to define and identify disparities and work to reduce them.

8. Academic health centers can help eliminate disparities

As part of their mission to prepare future generations of physicians to provide the highest quality of care, academic health centers should play a key role in helping eliminate racial disparities in health care.

To learn more, download your copy of "Addressing Racial Disparities in Health Care: A Targeted Action Plan for Academic Medical Centers," from the Association of American Medical Colleges.

9. Quotable: Plastic surgery standards moving away from "Eurocentric" model

"We are in the midst of exciting times as the United States experiences growing diversity and changing social attitudes toward race, culture, and ethnicity. For the facial plastic surgery community, this can be a watershed moment when we openly celebrate the complexity of humanity with a renewed aesthetic consciousness.

"The Eurocentric aesthetic platform is gradually expanding to allow for a more global interpretation of beauty."

- Monte O. Harris, MD, in "Cultivating a Global Aesthetic Consciousness"
Archives of Facial Plastic Surgery Nov./Dec. 2009

10. Sites seen: Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities

The burden of cancer is all too often greater for the poor, ethnic minorities, and the uninsured than for the general population. The Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities, part of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), works to reduce the unequal burden of cancer in our society.

Also, a new report from the NCI finds declines in rates of new cancer diagnoses and death for "most racial and ethnic populations."

Interested in more news?

In addition to the *Ending Disparities e-Letter*, the AMA also offers three other free monthly e-Letters that may be of interest:

