

Black History Month

It is a massive challenge to appreciate how deeply race and bias are inextricably linked to every facet of life for Black people. The recent presentation by Dr. Kenneth Hardy on race and managing the impacts of privilege and subjugation are an important start to our opening our minds, learning and becoming more respectful to each other and our clients on matters of race.

This year, the theme for Black History Month 2022 is Black Health and Wellness, a vitally critical area for discussion, learning and change, especially during this time of the COVID pandemic. Black community suspicion of the health care industry is yet another manifestation of response to systems, that in this context, have excluded would-be Black health care professionals, fictionalized images of Black people's physiology, imposed disparate medical treatment strategies and conducted experimentation of the most vile and racist sort imaginable. For Black people there are practical factors of genetics, environment, access to care and culture that pose unique needs warranting astute medical care, from sickle cell trait to the prevalence of hypertension, all of which require understanding the mental and physical strain of individual and group experience with bias and racism over centuries.

The following are perceptions, not of 100 years ago, but as recently as 2016, held by up to 50 percent of 222 surveyed medical students and residents: "Black people's nerve endings are less sensitive than white people's." "Black people's skin is thicker than white people's." "Black people's blood coagulates more quickly than white people's." (References noted below). This article outlining this study indicates further that false beliefs of Black people having a greater threshold for pain results in disparate medical treatment grounded in implicit bias among medical professionals. Some corrective response exists in the creation of courses on bias in the treatment of patients, coupled with a push to use objective factors for discerning the extent of pain. However, racial bias in medicine and the loss of community trust run deep, and will not turn around without demonstrable change.

The lack of medical professionals of color is another significant factor to consider, because it impacts on racial and cultural awareness needed to good medical treatment for Black patients. A key writing to note is the 1910 Flexner Report, which inspired the beginning of the medical school structure in the United States today. This document posited medical training in academic institutions rather than in private, for profit contexts, and featured extreme racist perspectives to deny access to Black medical students, while cutting off avenues for medical instruction to thousands of aspiring Black doctors. In response to this report, of 155 medical schools assessed in the US and Canada, all but 66 shut down, and five out of seven Black medical schools were lost (Howard University College of Medicine and Maharry Medical College remained open). There are estimates that had these schools not closed, there could have been between 27,000 and 35,000 Black graduating professionals entering the workforce between the time the schools closed and 2019. Today, there are 22,000 Black medical professionals out of 985,026 actively licensed physicians (2019), serving in a country with a population of 332.4 million, of whom 46.8 million people identify as Black.

The lost potential for Black physicians to have influenced minds and the shape of the medical profession is staggering, and indicative of how much catching up is required to change attitudes, build trust and achieve more healthy results for Black patients. In our work, therefore, the health challenges for Black clients and for our Black colleagues require that we be more understanding and considerate in appreciating the reasons and underpinnings to why lack of access to health care or questioning the soundness of medical advice exist. From the current COVID vaccine issue to following treatment recommendations for prevalent health conditions in the Black community, there are fundamental issues of trust that tie inextricably to the bias and hate Black people experience, and which will only change by removing those destructive factors from society.

This Black History Month, please take in an event (many are listed here), do a little reading on Black people and their experience with health care, share in a conversation and most importantly, consider

what you might do differently to help make our workplace, our client representation and our agency places where racism will not exist.

For Further Reading

“How we fail Black patients in pain,” Janice A. Sabin, Ph.D, MSW, article, American Association of Medical Schools (January 2020).

<https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/how-we-fail-black-patients-pain>

Understanding and Ameliorating Medical Mistrust Among Black Americans

<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/newsletter-article/2021/jan/medical-mistrust-among-black-americans>

Racial bias in pain assessment and treatment recommendations, and false beliefs about biological differences between blacks and whites,

<https://www.pnas.org/content/113/16/4296>

Black History Month Events and Resources (nearly all are free or very low cost – there are many events being held, and lots of other ways to honor the month)

https://www.google.com/search?q=black+history+events+massachusetts&rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS991US991&og=black+histprory+events+massachsuetts&aqs=chrome..69i57j33i10i160.24520j1j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8&ibp=htl:events&rciv=evn&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwib1Pe4kuv1AhWejYkEHZoxBIMQ8eoFKAJ6BAgXEA4#fpstate=tlldetail&htivrt=events&htichips=&htischips=&htidocid=L2F1dGhvcml0eS9ob3Jpem9uL2NsdXN0ZXJlZl9ldmVudC8yMDIyLTAyLTE5fDQ2ODM3Mzc0ODU2MzgZMTk3MTE%3D

Things to Do in Massachusetts

<https://www.visitma.com/things-to-do/holidays/black-history-month/>

<https://blog.mass.gov/blog/history/celebrate-black-history-month-through-historical-tours-and-trails/>

<https://www.masslive.com/living/2022/02/black-history-month-in-massachusetts-see-what-cities-towns-are-hosting-bhm-events.html>

Boston

<https://www.bostonusa.com/events/holidays/black-history-month/>

<https://www.bpl.org/news/black-history-month-2022/>

Springfield

https://www.google.com/search?q=black+history+events+massachusetts+springfield&rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS991US991&og=black+history+events+massachusetts+springfield&aqs=chrome..69i57j33i22i29i30.13185j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8&ibp=htl:events&rciv=evn&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjNj7e8oQv1AhWdjYkEHfcTCBwQ8eoFKAJ6BAgQEA4#htivrt=events&htidocid=L2F1dGhvcml0eS9ob3Jpem9uL2NsdXN0ZXJlZl9ldmVudC8yMDIyLTAyLTE5fDE4MjYyOTUzNDZMDg0MDcwNDM2&fpstate=tlldetail

<https://www.facebook.com/Black-History-Month-Springfield-MA-491417981681609/>

<https://springfield.edu/news/springfield-college-black-history-month-2022>

Pittsfield

<https://www.africanamericantrail.org/wp-content/uploads/Pittsfield-BrochureMap.pdf>

<https://explore.berkshiremuseum.org/their-stories-oral-histories-from-the-naacp>

<https://berkshires.macaronikid.com/articles/5c657ac123cadb498c728ac0/learn-about-black-history-in-the-berkshires>

<https://housatonicheritage.org/Places/african-american-heritage-trail-gt-barrington-mass/>

North of Boston (Lynn, Salem and beyond)

<https://www.creativenorthshore.com/black-history-month-where-to-celebrate-black-excellence-north-of-boston/amp/>

<https://www.salem.org/event/black-history-north-shore-perspectives/>

<https://northshorekid.com/event/black-history-month-family-day>

Worcester

<http://www.worcesterma.gov/black-history-month>

<https://www.worcesterart.org/exhibitions/us-them-we/>

Framingham

<https://framinghamlibrary.org/calendar/event/black-history-month-celebrate-creators>

<https://ramlink.framingham.edu/event/3151408>

<https://framinghamhistory.org/events/why-isnt-he-famous-dr-solomon-carter-fuller/> (small cost involved)

<https://www.smoc.org/>

Lawrence

<https://www.cityoflawrence.org/news/2022/01/13/city-lawrence-black-history-month-celebration-2022>

<https://thepressreleaseengine.com/Black+History+Month-Inid1804-205726>

<http://www.lawrencehistorycenter.org/lhcexhibits/other>

https://www.eagletribune.com/news/merrimack_valley/celebrating-black-history-month-in-north-andover/article_346d5cfa-8601-11ec-9a1b-bf3250cdca35.html

Lowell

<https://www.uml.edu/student-services/Multicultural/Heritage/Black-History-Month.aspx>

<https://www.visitdtl.com/vlbh/>

<https://www.lowell.k12.ma.us/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=38&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=14346&PageID=1&Comments=true>

<https://www.blacklowellcoalition.com/events>

Brockton

<https://www.blackownedbrockton.com/event-details/black-history-month-market-2022-02-12-12-00>

<https://www.bpsma.org/about/bps-news/latest-news>

<https://www.facebook.com/BlackOwned508/>

Taunton

<https://stayhappening.com/e/hands-on-history-week-E3LUTY8IT97H>