How Black Tech Founders Are Changing Health Care

Black entrepreneurs are focusing on creating culturally competent care.

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Patients of color want to feel understood by their doctors and health care providers, which is why Black entrepreneurs are stepping up to help individuals access culturally competent care.

Culturally competent care simply means a patient's unique heritage, values and beliefs are acknowledged during treatment. This can entail identifying health or ethnic disparities, having a diverse, involving a patient's community and collecting race, ethnicity and language preference data.

Ashlee Wisdom, who is Black, for example, launched her health and wellness website, Health in Her Hue, to connect women of color to myriad health care providers—doctors, nurses, therapists, doulas—across the country.

"People are constantly talking about Black women's poor health outcomes, and that's where the conversation stops," Wisdom said in a Fierce Healthcare article. "I didn't see anyone building anything to empower us."

In 2018, Health in Her Hue had only six doctors on its roster. Today, over 1,000 providers are available.

In 2017, Erica Plybeah created MedHaul, a company that provides patients with low-cost rides to and from medical appointments. Individuals simply complete a form on MedHaul's website and its team arranges a ride for them. Plybeah told Fierce Healthcare that she founded the company after seeing how difficult it was for her mother to care for her grandmother, who had type 2 diabetes, had lost two limbs and lived in the Mississippi Delta, where transportation is limited.

While MedHaul is available for any person to utilize, Plybeah said people of color, people in rural areas and low-income individuals are all more likely to experience challenges when arranging transportation. "For years, my family struggled with our transportation because my mom was her primary transporter," Plybeah said. "Trying to schedule all of her doctor's appointments around her work schedule was just a nightmare."

Black entrepreneurs continue to launch start-ups with the goal of closing the cultural gap in health care by offering diverse health care providers and supporting patients of color via new technology and voices.

“I feel like if I fail, that’s potentially going to shut the door for other Black women who are trying to build in this space,” Wisdom said. “But I try not to think about that too much.”

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