New Group Aims to Increase Black Men in Medicine

Black physicians account for only 3% of doctors in the United States.

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In an effort to address the lack of African-American men in medicine, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and the National Medical Association (NMA) formed the Action Collaborative for Black Men in Medicine.

Research has shown that Black people are more likely to go to the doctor and be transparent about their health concerns when their doctor is also Black. In fact, a 2020 article published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that patients reported having better medical experiences with doctors of the same race as them.

The Action Collaborative was inspired by a 2015 AAMC report titled “Altering The Course: Black Males in Medicine” that noted that more Black men applied and graduated from medical schools in 1978 than in 2014. Since 2014, there has been only a nominal increase in the number of Black men enrolled in medical school: from 2.4% during the 2014 to 2015 academic year to about 3% during the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

Today only 3% of physicians identified as Black or African American, according to AAMC.

Culturally sensitive health care is key to achieving equity within the health care system and supporting Black Americans, who not only experience higher rates of heart disease, stroke and hypertension but also have the lowest life expectancy of any racial group, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Action Collaborative identified sociocultural, premedical and academic medicine factors as barriers Black men face.

Elaborating in an article in Forbes, leaders of the collaborative explained: “Premedical factors include the quality of public education, funding, advising and access to support systems. Factors related to academic medicine include pathway programs, recruitment, admissions and leadership accountability for diversity. All of these factors are embedded in institutional and societal structures and sociocultural environments that have been shaped by systemic racism, negative narratives of Black men and institutional cultures and climates that are not inclusive of Black

men.”

The collaborative plans to work with K through 12 schools, colleges and professional organizations to develop and implement solutions during the next three years that they hope will help give rise to long-lasting, systemwide change and improve engagement with health care in the Black community.

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