

## **The American College of Physicians' Commitment to Being an Anti-Racist, Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Organization**

**Approved by the Executive Committee of the Board of Regents on behalf of the Board of Regents on September 28, 2020.**

Racism, racial disparities, discrimination, harassment and violence are public health issues. The American College of Physicians (ACP) has long fought against discrimination due to race, ethnic origin, nationality, cultural background and other personal characteristics. ACP policies have examined the prevalence of racism and discrimination in U.S. society and their role as a social determinant of health while calling attention to the public health impact of hate crimes and discrimination and the harmful consequences of racial, ethnic and gender disparities in health and health care.

Physicians, as members of the profession of medicine, have an ethical duty to care for all. Physicians and the profession must work to maintain the trust of patients and society every day. It is imperative that all people, including physicians, [speak out against hate and discrimination](#). To correct racial injustices, it is also imperative that organizations, institutions and individuals address sources of prejudice, racism, structural barriers to access to health care, discrimination and harm through transparency and accountability. The profession and practice of medicine has had a history of racism and discrimination. Examples include the segregation of hospital wards and the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study, where 600 Black men were enrolled in order to observe the natural course of syphilis without their informed consent, a major violation of ethical standards.

ACP, too, must reconcile and be accountable for its own historical organizational injustices and inequities. ACP acknowledges and regrets its past racism, discrimination and exclusionary practices throughout its history, whether intentional or unintentional, by act or omission. In the first half of the 20th century, College membership was limited to English-language speakers in North America. There was not a Black member until after 1947, and the first record of formal ACP activity to study and develop recommendations on diversity wasn't until 1971.

We can and will do better.

ACP pledges to be an anti-racist organization dedicated to policy, advocacy and action to confront and eliminate racism, racial disparities, discrimination, bias and inequities in health and health care and within our own organization. ACP strives to embody a diverse, inclusive and equitable organization that facilitates effective and respectful interaction among individuals who hold a broad range of views, and respect, empathy and understanding of others. ACP is studying, listening, and developing evidence-based solutions to create an equitable and inclusive organizational culture, and to guide our interactions with members, staff, other organizations, policymakers, and society.

The following overarching principles, policies and ongoing efforts provide an important foundation upon which all ACP diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism initiatives will be built, and serve as critical value statements to guide the College's work and the actions of staff and governance. Advancing

diversity, equity and inclusion and anti-racism is at the core of ACP's advocacy, and is woven throughout our ongoing efforts to advocate for changes in public policy to confront and support these issues.

ACP is committed:

- **To ensuring the diversity, equity and inclusion of ACP members, governance and employees.** ACP welcomes all members and respects and welcomes diversity of views and values when formulating policy. ACP believes that a [commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity](#) strengthens the organization's capacity to respond to the needs of patients, members, the profession and the public. ACP recognizes the importance of cultural humility in the delivery of health care to patients, and will seek ways to promote these values and skills to members. ACP will prioritize inclusion in healthcare, welcoming and hearing all voices, and actively engaging diverse members in local, national and global College activities.
- **To being an anti-racist organization.** ACP is committed to policy and action to confront and eliminate racism, and condemns the injustices and harm that Black and Indigenous communities and other people of color experience as a result of racism. ACP is [advocating for changes](#) in public policy to confront and end racism in health care, medical education, and law enforcement, and to oppose all forms of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, cultural identification, and other characteristics. ACP advocates to end barriers to care that disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous and Latinx persons, and other people of color, and opposes and is seeking the reversal of policies that are discriminatory. ACP commits to developing further policy to address discrimination and racism in health care, medical education, and society.
- **To combatting racial disparities that affect health and health care.** This includes fighting the prejudice at the root of the problem, as well as [the discrimination, inequities, violence and hate crimes](#) that result from that prejudice, through ACP policies and by advocating for changes in public policies to confront these issues. Racial disparities, discrimination, harassment and violence are [public health issues](#). ACP [is advocating for evidence-based solutions to mitigate the social determinants of health that disproportionately harm racial and ethnic communities and exacerbate health disparities](#). ACP's [Vision for Health Care](#), a comprehensive reimagining of the U.S. health care system, calls for systemic reform that addresses [social determinants of health and reduces barriers to care](#).
- **To promoting gender equity and eliminating the inequities in compensation and career advancement that physicians can face.** ACP is committed to addressing the unique challenges female physicians confront over the course of their careers in order to [foster an inclusive environment that promotes growth and development for female physicians](#). ACP recognizes that the intersectionality of various characteristics of personal identity can have a compounding effect and result in larger inequities for women of color.

Overarching principles, goals and actions that guide the actions of ACP employees and governance:

- **Core Values and Standing Goals:**

- *Compassion*: respecting the dignity of others and being sensitive and empathic to their needs.
  - *Inclusion*: embracing diversity and inclusion to foster engagement, belonging, and respect in all that we do.
  - *Equity and Justice*: creating a just and equitable culture without barriers or limits to our members, patients and the profession.
  - Promoting and respecting diversity, inclusion, and equity in all aspects of the profession; and
  - Welcoming, considering and respecting the many diverse voices of internal medicine and its subspecialties and working together for the benefit of the public, patients, our members, and our profession.
- **Strategic Priority:** The Board of Regents has identified Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement as organizational priorities, with the expectation that ACP will emphasize inclusion in health care, welcoming and hearing all voices, and actively engaging diverse members in local, national and global College activities across their career.
  - **Established a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee** to [assure integration of diversity and inclusion](#) across the College's governance and membership that is responsive to the changing environment and demographics.
  - **Training in diversity, equity and inclusion** across the College to raise awareness of and mitigate individual biases and assumptions.
  - **Collaboration with other organizations.** The College is collaborating with other societies and stakeholders to develop initiatives, collaborate on programming and share best practices to increase diversity, equity and inclusion in the practice of internal medicine. ACP's Council of Subspecialty Societies has been facilitating the sharing of best practices and policies across internal medicine subspecialties.

We must engage in self-reflection, commit to action, and work together to end racism, bias, discrimination, harassment and inequity in our society, in our profession, in our communities, and within ourselves. ACP is committed to transformational change and asks internists to pledge to do the same.