



Zebra Hoofbeats

In a blink of an eye, August has come. At the beginning of the pandemic, we urged you all to take the opportunity to work on self-reflection and self-care/wellness. When protests for Black Lives Matter started across the nation, we urged you all to take responsibility and become advocates for marginalized communities. There has been undoubtedly a lot to process during these times. We want to say that we recognize your efforts and commitment to becoming leaders in the healthcare community and to becoming a better you for yourself. There is a quote that we would like to share with you from Lori Gottlieb's book, *Maybe You Should Talk to Someone: A Therapist, Her Therapist, and Our Lives Revealed*, "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." Please remember to take time for yourselves and focus on your needs, too. For the new students who started recently, we want to remind you that you can still build a support group through virtual learning, and the team at *Zebra Hoofbeats* are always willing to listen. We are here for you, Zebras.

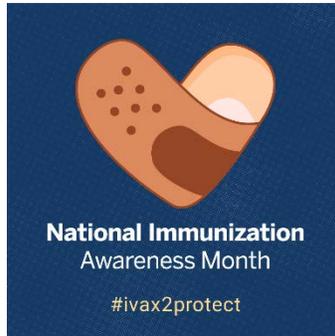


National Breastfeeding Month

The United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) proclaimed August to be National Breastfeeding Month in 2011. The USBC is a nonprofit organization that aims to advocate for and support policy changes that enable families to breastfeed in the US.

This year, the theme is *Many Voices United* to emphasize the need for policy changes that support any and every family that chooses to breastfeed. A contributor to decreased breastfeeding of infants is unequal access to a supportive environment for breastfeeding, which has led to racial and ethnic disparities in the initiation and duration of breastfeeding.

The USBC will be hosting a series of webcasts this month in collaboration with organizers of Native Breastfeeding Week (Aug 9-15) and Black Breastfeeding Week (Aug 25-31). If you are interested in learning more, [here](#) is their website.



National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM)

NIAM is an opportunity for healthcare professionals to communicate the importance of vaccinations for protecting patients of all ages against diseases that can be prevented with vaccines.

As aspiring medical professionals, this is an opportunity for us to learn how to effectively educate our future patients and others about the health benefits of vaccines. The CDC developed a number of [informative graphics](#) for professionals to share and [videos](#) providing guidance for how to educate patients and recommend vaccines effectively.

There are also [Toolkits](#) for communicating with other healthcare professionals, parents, and patients about how vaccines work, why they are recommended, and when they should be administered.



International Assistance Dog Week (IADW) - August 2-8

IADW recognizes the incredible, hard-working assistance dogs that provide aid and freedom to individuals mitigating limitations related to a disability.

The goal of this week is to recognize the hard work assistance dogs do every day, raise awareness of how assistance dogs are trained, honor the raisers and trainers of these dogs, and recognize the heroic deeds performed by assistance dogs. IADW is celebrated differently in each community but can include doggie bake sales, dog walks, ceremonies honoring dog heroes, and talks.

For inspirational stories about heroic puppies in different communities and ways to get involved in education, visit IADW's [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).



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World Humanitarian Day (WHD) - August 19

WHD recognizes humanitarian workers killed and injured during their work and honors all current aid and health workers who continue to provide service, protection, and support to communities in need.

This year we recognize the efforts of aid workers striving to continue to support these communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has impacted humanitarian efforts throughout the world, leading to lack of access to communities in need and increased frontline response from local organizations. For facts, stories, and reports about humanitarian efforts throughout the world visit the WHD [website](#).



Islamic New Year – August 19/August 20

The first month of the Islamic year is called Muharram, and it is observed on the first sighting of the lunar crescent, which falls on the evening of August 19 this year. Different Islamic denominations, Shi'a and Sunni, and cultures do different things to commemorate this holiday.

For Sunni Muslims, it is a day of celebration, while for Shia Muslims, it's a day of mourning. The first Islamic year began in AD 622, when the Prophet Muhammad emigrated from Mecca to Medina to escape religious persecution.



Ganesh Chaturthi - August 22

In the Hindu culture, Ganesh Chaturthi is a 10-day festival marking the arrival of the elephant-headed deity Ganesha, the god of prosperity and wisdom. At the start of the festival, idols of Ganesha are placed on platforms in homes or pandals (outdoor tents).

What follows is worship which consists of paying tribute, chanting Vedic hymns and religious texts, and offering sweets. Ganesha's favorite foods are coconut, jaggery, and modaks (sweet dumplings).

At the end of the festival, the idols are carried to local rivers in huge processions accompanied by music and dancing, and then they are submerged in the water, which symbolizes Ganesha's journey back to Mt. Kailas, birthplace of his parents.

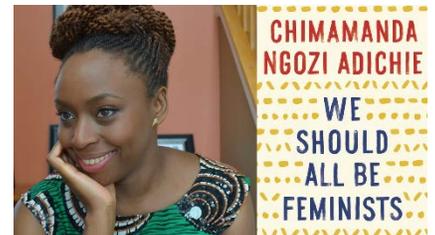


Women's Equality Day – August 26

Women's Equality Day is celebrated every year in the United States to commemorate the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, which provides equal rights to women and right to vote.

This was the culmination of a massive, peaceful civil rights movement led by women starting in 1848 at the world's first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York.

The observance of Women's Equality Day also calls attention to women's continuing efforts toward full equality. There is still much more to be done. Show your support by reading and sharing resources about women.



From Connie's Library:

I would be remiss if I did not recommend Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "We Should All Be Feminists," especially for Women's Equality Day. This is a bestselling, essay-long book that rejects the notion that being a "feminist" is an insult.

It also challenges the gender expectations we impose on boys and girls from a young age. Drawing from her own experiences, Adichie describes her definition of a feminist and what it means to be a woman. I encourage you all to read this very short but impactful writing.

"We Should All Be Feminists" was originally presented at a TEDx Talk in 2012; you can watch it [here](#).



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Photo Credit: Kojo T.

“Improving Health for African Americans Involves Dismantling a Larger System of Racism”

By Rebekah Russell, MPH, MSI

Dismantle: to destroy (something) in an orderly way; to gradually cause (something) to come to an end.

I recently attended a regularly scheduled discussion series that was designed to get physicians, medical students, and other health workers engaged in conversations on the intersection between social justice and health. The group was provided a set of articles and questions for discussion. Two of the questions are of particular interest for me:

1. How do we address racism as healthcare professionals in a clinical setting and in hospitals? Name short and long-term goals.
2. How do we address racism to improve population health? Name short and long-term goals.

These questions, amongst others, have been a core part of my first few weeks of medical school and are a component of the efforts being taken to remedy the impacts racism has had on health outcomes for African Americans. In March 2020, the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME),

released the accreditation standards for the 2021-2022 academic year.

The accreditation standards require that medical schools include a number of topics that address racism (e.g. Societal Problems, Cultural Competence and Health Care Disparities, and Medical Ethics) and a glossary of terms for LCME Accreditation Standards and Elements which includes “benefits of diversity.” In addition, many schools have moved to a holistic review process, which is one way to increase diversity in medical school classes and alleviate barriers to admissions due to inequity.

And though these measures are done with the best of intentions, I believe that the short and long-term solution for addressing racism’s impact on health is to dismantle the system of institutionalized racism that permits the oppression and subjugation of African Americans in every space. Anything short of dismantling institutionalized racism is placing a band-aid over a leaking vessel.

First, you cannot separate racism in a clinical setting from racism in any other context. As health education is teaching us, health is intimately intertwined with income, education, housing, and other forms of inequity known as social determinants of health.

As a result, if healthcare providers want to see improved health outcomes for the African American population, they would work to address the socioeconomic factors that make up roughly 40% of population health, health behaviors that make up 30% of population health, and the physical environment that makes up 10% of population health. Only until racism is addressed in these sectors can we begin to think about racism

in healthcare which makes up 20% of population health.

Many solutions to racism in the clinical setting include changes to medical education, diversity in student populations, trauma-informed care, and implicit-bias training.

However, what is the solution when the very diagnostic tools used by physicians introduce racial bias into health care? The only solution is to dismantle the entire system and begin anew.

As Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton wrote in their work “Black Power: The Politics of Liberation,” the job of addressing racism cannot be left to the present institutions and agencies, because those structures are inherently flawed with racism. However, I understand that dismantling an old system and rebuilding a new system of health, education, economics, and politics cannot be done overnight, and thus we need immediate solutions that healthcare professionals and the institutions for which they work and play can take to address racism in America.

I offer four immediate solutions to begin to truly address systemic racism in healthcare in a meaningful way:

1. Provide education on the history of race in American and the intentional things done to oppress and subjugate African Americans

In this time of reawakened social justice and focus on race, there are a variety of resources available to educate medical students on the history of race in America and its present and ongoing impact.

2. Increase the number of Black and African American matriculants into medical school



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A recent article outlines the decline of African American males in medical schools over the past decades which is frankly unacceptable.

3. Increase the number of Black and African American faculty in medical schools

In 2019, data demonstrates that medical school faculty remain predominantly white (63.9%) and male (58.6%).

4. Partner with community efforts to alleviate the social inequity that impacts socioeconomic factors and health behaviors

Through partnerships with community efforts, healthcare providers can ensure that health education in the clinic is possible through community resource availability and increased opportunity to make healthier choices. This means that physicians have to be aware of the community opportunities available to their patients, and if necessary be involved in the creation of those resources.

Though this is my third week of medical school, this is my 24th year as an African American woman in America. In order to solve the problem of race in this country, it requires us to move outside of our comfort zones and move towards being comfortable having these conversations. America has a problem of institutionalized racism that impacts every facet of life for the African American population. If healthcare providers want the best quality of life for their patients, they must first dismantle the system of racism.

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