It’s Undeniable

In an opinion piece titled “Racism Is a Public Health Crisis,” the Healthcare Anchor Network commits to addressing racism and the public health disparities it causes. Below is an edited excerpt.

January 4, 2021 By Healthcare Anchor Network

As members and leaders of health care groups across the nation addressing the disproportionate Black and Brown mortality of COVID-19, we say without hesitation that Black Lives Matter.

No person of decency can look at the images of George Floyd’s killing without feelings of rage, horror, shame and grief. The deaths of George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor —and too many others—are unjust.

We must double down on our efforts. Systemic racism poses a real threat to the health of our patients, families and communities. We stand with all those who have raised their voices.

The health systems we represent are deeply woven into the fabric of the communities we serve, live and work in, and we stand united as frontline groups against racism, injustice and inaction.

Systemic racism results in generational trauma and poverty while also causing higher rates of illness and death in Black and Indigenous communities and communities of color. We have seen how the trauma of systemic racism adds to the historical injustices that have disproportionately affected communities of color. Health systems across the nation work to provide high-quality, compassionate care in the face of health disparities and poor outcomes resulting from social and economic inequities. In rural areas, where resources are spread out across larger geographies, we have seen health care groups and community partners adapt to shifting conditions.

These social determinants of health include poverty, inadequate housing, underperforming schools, police brutality, mass incarceration, food deserts, joblessness and underemployment, violence and poor access to health care. All these factors contribute to health inequities in our communities. And they serve as a recipe for pain, suffering, premature mortality and civil unrest.

There are also resilience, innovation, a tradition of faith and a spirit of unity that thrive under this systemic burden. Imagine the potential for our communities with improved social and economic conditions and health outcomes.

It’s time for action. We will work more intentionally with community-based partners in building and

sustaining the sweeping change needed to ensure health equity across the country and in our most under-resourced communities.

As health care groups, we are committed to being part of the solution, both within our organizations and in partnership with local community groups. We are focused on improving access to care and eliminating systemic racism, which contributes to poor health outcomes.

We have come together as part of the Healthcare Anchor Network, a health system–led collaboration working to improve community health and well-being by leveraging our assets, including hiring, purchasing and investment for equitable, local economic impact.

Our society only truly thrives when everyone has an opportunity to succeed and live a healthy life. We are committed to moving forward together. By harnessing the collective strengths of our organizations, we will help serve our communities as agents of change.

The health care systems that have signed on to this statement are: Advocate Aurora Health, Alameda Health System, AMITA Health, Baystate Health, BJC HealthCare, Bon Secours Mercy Health, Boston Children's Hospital, Boston Medical Center, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, ChristianaCare, Cleveland Clinic, CommonSpirit Health, Cone Health, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Health, Denver Health, Einstein Healthcare Network, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, Gundersen Health System, Kaiser Permanente, Lurie Children's, M Health Fairview, Maimonides Medical Center, Mass General Brigham, Northwell Health, ProMedica, Providence St. Joseph Health, Rush University Medical Center, RWJBarnabas Health, San Mateo County Health, Seattle Children's, Spectrum Health, The MetroHealth System, Trinity Health, UC San Francisco, UMass Memorial Health, University Hospitals, University of Utah Health, VCU Health and Yale New Haven Health.

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