Rate of black males applying to med school declines

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Despite an overall increase in the number of black men graduating from college, they aren’t attending medical school in similar rates. In fact, the number of black males applying to medical school is lower now than it was in the 1970s. A new report explains why and offers key diversity solutions.

Black male med school applicants by the numbers

“Altering the Course: Black Males in Medicine,” a new report from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) gathers the perspectives of 11 black premedical students, physicians, researchers and leaders through interviews that explore possible factors for the decline of black men in medical school. The report also uses research and data to understand these trends and find broad-based solutions to alter them for black men.

In an analysis of black male applicants in medical school admissions, the report noted that:

- In 1978, there were 1,410 black male applicants to medical school. But in 2014, there were just 1,337.
- The number of black male matriculants to medical school over more than 35 years has not surpassed the 1978 numbers.
- In 1978, medical schools saw 542 black male matriculants, and in 2014, they had 515.
- No other minority group has experienced such a decline in medical school applications. Disparity also exists between genders, with black women making up 62.2 percent of black medical school applicants in 2014, while black males only accounted for 37.8 percent.

Interviewees cited several factors for this applicant decline, including pitfalls in the public education system, limited knowledge about the pathway to becoming a physician and poor access to positive black role models. These factors combined with common concerns about medical school debt often stunt black males’ interest in medicine before it even starts.

URL: https://www.ama-assn.org/education/medical-school-diversity/rate-black-males-applying-med-school-declines

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How medical schools can help

But these factors don’t mean medical schools can’t change the current trajectory, starting by making cultural inclusion an institutional priority and changing the kind of conversations students and educators have about diversity, according to the report.

One of the common myths about diversity in medical education is that it only benefits people of color, but if more black males are to attend medical school, that perception must change, according to Cedric Bright, MD, assistant dean of admissions at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine.

“Most universities, I feel, when we talk about diversity, immediately think of losing positions for other deserving students,” Dr. Bright said. “In actuality, you increase the educational satisfaction by having a more diverse student body. Research has shown that.”

To combat this issue, the report recommends that medical schools create strategic student outreach programs with versatile influencers—like faith-based and grassroots organizations—in underserved communities. It also suggests partnering with minority-based institutions on diversity programming, hiring more black physicians to serve as medical school faculty and improving academic advising among black male students in high school and college.

Want more diversity solutions? Read part two of this story, which take a look at key recommendations from the AAMC and practical examples of diversity efforts for medical schools to consider in their own universities and training programs.

Explore additional efforts to improve diversity and reduce health disparities

- Learn about the 21 medical students the AMA Foundation recently selected as future minority physician leaders. Read their unique perspectives on being a student of color in medical school and how they plan to succeed while promoting diversity in medicine.
- See how these medical schools are tackling challenges in health disparities and cultural competencies.
- Educate yourself and your peers on the 5 myths of diversity in med ed.
- Watch this Google hangout to learn more ways schools and students are promoting diversity in medical education
- Visit the AMA Minority Affairs Section Web page, which features the latest on AMA policies, news and events to promote diversity in medicine and public health. You can also join the
section to get further involved.