

# 10 women in medicine who advocate for underserved populations

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**Sara Berg, MS**

Senior News Writer

Despite dramatic improvements in many areas of health care, patients from racial and ethnic minority groups experience lower-quality care and have worse outcomes. These people are less likely to receive routine medical care and face higher rates of morbidity and mortality than white patients. Health disparities also exist when it comes to care for women and LGBTQ patients.



Learn about these 10 women in medicine who are working to make a difference in this vital area.

## **Neelum Aggarwal, MD**

Until her mother underwent a brain operation to remove a benign tumor, Dr. Aggarwal—a neurologist at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago—had never known a family member with a medical condition that required surgery. While her mother received support from her and her family, she came away believing there needed to be more education around the rehabilitation process. Dr. Aggarwal, who has served as chief diversity and inclusion officer for the American Medical Women’s Association, vowed to not lose sight of the importance of social supports that patients and families need.

Read more about Dr. Aggarwal.

## **Kelly Landeen, MD**

Coming from a military family, Dr. Landeen—an otolaryngology resident at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville—was urged to pursue a career of serving others. She works to ensure adequate preventive health care and education are available to all patients, regardless of background or socioeconomic status. When Dr. Landeen was a third-year medical student, she was recognized by the National Public Health Service for her work in addressing health disparities affecting the Native American communities in her home state of South Dakota.

Read more about Dr. Landeen.

## **Fatima Cody Stanford, MD, MPH, MPA**

Since the age of 3, Dr. Stanford, an obesity medicine specialist in Boston and assistant professor at Harvard Medical School, has had an insatiable desire to serve humankind through healing. She moves medicine by ensuring that physicians treat the 100 million-plus children and adults who live with obesity. And as a Gold Congressional Award recipient, Dr. Stanford has established herself as an advocate for racial and ethnic minority patients in her community.

Read more about Dr. Stanford.

## Tiffani Bell, MD

A few days before her 16th birthday, Dr. Bell's father passed away at 44 from a heart attack and obesity-related complications. This tragic event confirmed that she wanted to spend her life helping treat and reduce the impact of chronic or preventable diseases. Dr. Bell, an assistant professor in child and adolescent psychiatry at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, continues her advocacy and outreach to underserved communities in hopes of inspiring others to pursue their dreams.

Read more about Dr. Bell.

## Dionne Hart, MD

As a specialist in addiction medicine and psychiatry, Dr. Hart advocates for people with mental illnesses. She appreciates the opportunity to treat patients who have complex social and legal problems that are an indirect or direct consequence of their mental-health problems. Through her work, Dr. Hart has gained the opportunity to collaborate with multiple specialists to improve the health and function of her patients.

Read more about Dr. Hart.

## Bukky Ajagbe

A third-year medical student at Lincoln Memorial University-DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine in Harrogate, Tennessee, Ajagbe has always known her path. She is a member of the AMA Medical Student Section's Minority Issues Committee and AMA Minority Affairs Section, which allow her to advocate for patients. Ajagbe decided she wanted to become someone who could address the many inequities she personally experienced and witnessed related to health care. (She was a second-year medical student at the time she was profiled).

Read more about Ajagbe.

## Brandi Ring, MD

As an ob-gyn in Denver, Dr. Ring gives a voice to those who might not otherwise have one. She brings their stories about struggles to get access to health care to legislators and policymakers to

make meaningful changes. She is trying to move medicine in the direction of safer, more affordable and more sustainable care for everyone.

Read more about Dr. Ring.

## **Lauren Engel**

A career in medicine allows Engel, a medical student in Milwaukee, to blend her love of science and passion for serving others. She is also pursuing a master's degree in health law jurisprudence and a certificate in health care compliance to better advocate for patients and help underserved populations navigate the complex health care system.

Read more about Engel.

## **Uzoagu A. Okonkwo, MD, PhD**

As an internal medicine resident at Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu, Dr. Okonkwo moves medicine through her diversity and curiosity. She believes that everyone should be treated with dignity and respect—whether a student or patient, young or old, immigrant or U.S.-born—and hopes that medicine continues to acknowledge the importance of diversity in health care. (Dr. Okonkwo was a medical student at the time she was profiled).

Read more about Okonkwo.

## **Desiray C. Bailey, MD**

A retired anesthesiologist in Seattle, Dr. Bailey represents GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality on the AMA Advisory Committee on LGBTQ Issues. Her passion is advocacy for underserved populations, especially patients in the LGBTQ community. Dr. Bailey helps shape policy and education, and improve access to competent health care.

Read more about Dr. Bailey.



This September, the AMA is marking Women in Medicine Month by celebrating trailblazers, advocates and leaders. Learn more about recent AMA advocacy efforts to address issues such as civil and human rights, and mental health.