

The history of African Americans and organized medicine

Segregation and racism within the medical profession have, and continue to, profoundly impact the African American community. Yet, the complex history of race in the medical profession is rarely acknowledged and often misunderstood. The AMA Institute for Ethics invited a panel of experts to review and analyze the historical roots of the black-white divide in American medicine. The following is a summary of the panel's findings, along with other resources.

In 1989, the AMA's Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs issued a report entitled, *Black-White Disparities in Health Care* (PDF), which framed the inequitable provision of medical care according to race as an ethical problem.

The AMA also initiated an independent review (PDF) to provide candid and critical comments that would assist the Writing Group in making its published report as sound as possible and to ensure that the report met the Institute for Ethics' standards for objectivity, evidence and responsiveness to the study charge.

AMA apology to National Medical Association

For more than 100 years, the AMA actively reinforced or passively accepted racial inequalities and the exclusion of African-American physicians. In an address to the National Medical Association (NMA) Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, on July 30, 2008, Ronald M. Davis, MD, then the AMA's immediate past president, apologized for more than a century of AMA policies (PDF) that excluded African-Americans from the AMA, in addition to policies that also barred them from some state and local medical societies.

Davis pledged that the AMA would "do everything in our power to right the wrongs that were done by our organization to African-American physicians and their families and their patients."

Background resources

- [History of African American Physicians & Organized Medicine](#) (PDF)
- [African-American Medical Societies](#) (PDF)
- [Medicine and The Civil Rights Era](#) (PDF)
- [The AMA & the NMA: Past, Present and Future](#) (PDF)

- | [African-American Physicians Organized Medicine Timeline \(PDF\)](#)
- | [National Medical Journal \(PDF\)](#)
- | [African-American Physicians Organized Medicine Bibliography \(PDF\)](#)
- | [The Writing Group's Acknowledgements \(PDF\)](#)