

AMA Board of Trustees pledges action against racism and police brutality

At the Special Meeting of the American Medical Association House of Delegates, the AMA Board of Trustees pledged action to confront systemic racism and police brutality.

Transcript

June 7, 2020

Jesse Ehrenfeld, MD, MPH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Delegates, I'm speaking to you on behalf of the Board today because our country is amidst great social upheaval. Like all of you, I was stunned by the horrific death of George Floyd at the hands of police. George Floyd's death was a great injustice. We know that people of Color are hurting. We know that people of good consciousness everywhere are hurting. While George Floyd's death catapulted police brutality to national consciousness, there are far too many similar incidents that have occurred, some recorded and some not, where people of Color and other marginalized and minoritized communities have faced a similar oppression and death.

Earlier this week, my fellow Board member, Willy Underwood, captured the sentiment that I know you all share. We stand in opposition to racism and racist thoughts and ideas. We stand in opposition to covert and overt racism in all its forms. As physicians, we must stand in opposition to racism because it truly is a public health emergency.

The House, in 2018, passed policy that recognized that physical or verbal violence between law enforcement officers and the public, particularly among Black and Brown communities, where these incidents are more prevalent and pervasive, is a critical determinant of health. This policy also supported research into public health consequences of these violent interactions. As the details came out about George Floyd's death, your AMA president, Patrice Harris, and I as your Board chair, coauthored a viewpoint from the AMA that declared police violence must stop. Our column went on to say that, while we recognize that many who serve in law enforcement are committed to justice, the violence inflicted by police in the news headlines today must be understood in relation to the larger social and economic arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm's way, leading to both premature illness and death.

Police violence is a striking reflection of our American legacy of racism, a system that assigns a value and structures opportunity, while unfairly advantaging some and disadvantaging others based simply on their skin color. On Friday, your AMA Board voted unanimously to approve an important statement on racism. We also developed a video that we wanted to share that further demonstrates our commitment to address racism. As leaders in medicine, we hope that you will all join the AMA in affirming these values.

Patrice Harris, MD, MA:

We, the Board of Trustees

Bruce Scott, MD:

State that

Barbara McAneny, MD:

That the AMA recognizes that racism

Scott Ferguson, MD:

Racism

Michael Suk, MD:

Racism and its systemic

Willie Underwood III, MD, MSc, MPH:

Structural

Mario Motta, MD:

Institutional

William Kobler, MD:

And interpersonal forms

Willarda Edwards, MD, MBA:

Is an urgent threat to public health



Jack Resneck Jr., MD:

The advancement of health equity

William McDade, MD:

And a barrier to excellence in delivery of medical care.

Dr. Ehrenfeld:

The AMA opposes all forms of racism.

Kevin Williams, MD:

The AMA denounces police brutality

Russell Kridel, MD:

And all forms

Lisa Bohman Egbert, MD:

All forms of racially motivated violence.

Sandra Adamson Fryhofer, MD:

The AMA will actively work

Grayson Armstrong, MD:

To dismantle racist

Gerald Harmon, MD, MPH:

And discriminatory policies and practices

Sarah Mae Smith:

Across all of health care

Bobby Mukkamala, MD:

All of health care



Susan Bailey, MD:

All of health care.