

COVID-19 health equity initiatives: Meharry Medical College

In this installment of "COVID-19 health equity initiatives," read how Meharry Medical College works with the local Nashville government to create and lead COVID-19 wards, as well as expand testing teams in prisons and churches via mobile operations.

Overview of initiative

Meharry Medical College

In partnership with Meharry's Center for Health Policy and Data Science Center for Minority Health, the Center for the Study of Social Determinants is ready to develop, test, and implement a suite of mobile applications that will engage patients in the Meharry medical system, improve the efficiency of contact tracing, serve as an ongoing access point to critical health resources in underserved communities, and provide inputs to a continuously evolving artificial intelligence-driven data informatics system designed to predict and overcome health disparities.

A system of this nature can change the way we understand health disparities, build the foundation for smarter and more precise health care delivery, and provide evidence to support more equitable health policy decision-making.

As Meharry deepens its COVID-19 response, we have an opportunity to scale our successes to a nationwide impact—not just to reach communities that need resources now, but to ensure we are equipped with the information necessary to face tomorrow's health challenges. —Patrick Johnson, senior vice president, Meharry Medical College

Meharry collaborated with the Congressional Black Caucus to write legislative language ensuring the federal government assesses demographic data related to COVID-19 properly, and even formally advised the National Football League on its plans for the 2020 season.

What was the impetus for the racial equity work?

With a commitment to health equity and medical excellence, it was natural for Meharry to step up as a leader early on in the COVID-19 crisis.

Minority populations were being ignored in the early stages of COVID response. No one was recording demographic information. No one was offering public testing in Black neighborhoods.

When did the work begin? When is it expected to end?

Our work began March 11, 2020 and continues to this day.

What are the expected results or outcomes?

- | More efficient contact tracing
- | Hotspot identification
- | Integration of patient-centered prevention and treatment tools
- | Predictive analytics and research registries

Who are the key partners for this work?

- | Tennessee National guard
- | City of Nashville
- | Hands on Nashville

What are your future steps for this initiative?

Contact tracing and drug development.

What advice & recommendations do you have?

Involve the four HBCU academic health science centers.

Contact information

For more information about the Meharry Medical College initiative, please contact: Patrick Johnson, senior vice president at pjohnson@mmc.edu.

Find out about other initiatives

- | Black Arizona COVID-19 Task Force
- | Cambridge Health Alliance (Massachusetts)
- | Chicago Racial Equity Rapid Response Team
- | Michigan Public Health Institute
- | Milwaukee Health Department
- | New York Department of Health
- | Public Health Alliance of Southern California
- | Spectrum Health Lakeland
- | UC San Diego Refugee Health Unit

Visit the COVID-19 health equity initiatives main page for additional information.