

New fellowship will equip doctors to advance U.S. health equity

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Kevin B. O'Reilly

News Editor

What's the news: A postdoctoral fellowship program starting in September will give 10 doctors a chance to dive deep and get the skills and knowledge they need to help combat the root causes of health inequity in communities across the country.

The Medical Justice in Advocacy Fellowship is a collaborative, first-of-its-kind education initiative from the AMA and the Morehouse School of Medicine Satcher Health Leadership Institute. The fellowship program aims to train the next generation of physician advocacy leaders to drive meaningful policy and structural changes.

“Our goal of ensuring that all people have the conditions to achieve optimal health requires that physicians be equipped with the consciousness, tools and resources needed to confront racism and other forms of oppression in our health and other social systems, such as housing and education,” said AMA Chief Health Equity Officer Aletha Maybank, MD, MPH.

“Through the creation of this fellowship, we have the opportunity to use collective leadership, knowledge and experience to push upstream and train physician leaders how to effectively advocate for the policies and laws that advance equity and justice,” Dr. Maybank added. “These fellows, working collaboratively with others, will become a force of change within their own communities and help drive the future of medicine.”

Why it's important: COVID-19 has exacerbated and laid bare the inequities that pervade American medicine, as shown in a February report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics detailing the pandemic's unequal impact on U.S. life expectancy.

Find out how COVID-19's unequal impact tied to another inequality—of income.

The fellowship “will enable physicians to more effectively address the inequities faced by our most

vulnerable communities,” said Daniel E. Dawes, professor of health policy and executive director of the Satcher Health Leadership Institute.

“This new and unique fellowship will provide physicians with the framework and tools needed to advocate for their patients and help move our nation closer to realizing health equity for all population groups,” said Dawes, author of the 2020 book, *The Political Determinants of Health*.

Among other critical areas, the fellowship training will explore:

- | Upstream, action-based models of advocacy that address social, political, and structural drivers of health.
- | Structural, cultural, political, and historical analysis of the production of inequities.
- | Sector and resource engagement required to improve community health and well-being.

Systemwide bias and institutionalized racism contribute to inequities across the U.S. health care system. The AMA is fighting for greater health equity by identifying and eliminating inequities through advocacy, community leadership and education. The fellowship highlights the AMA’s commitment to creating a culturally aware and diverse physician workforce.

Learn more: Physicians participating in the fellowship—which runs from September 2021 through November 2022—will get a stipend of \$15,000 and would be eligible for up to 28 CME credit hours. Applications are due March 31.

Find out how the AMA is reshaping its path toward racial equity.