

COVID-19 vaccination: Why collecting race, ethnicity is critical

MAR 11, 2021

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What's the news: America's physicians, pharmacists and nurses are urging their colleagues and other key health care stakeholders to intensify efforts to collect information on race and ethnicity when administering COVID-19 vaccines.

"Race and ethnicity data provides critical information to clinicians, health care organizations, public health agencies and policymakers, allowing them to equitably allocate resources across all communities, evaluate health outcomes and improve quality of care and delivery of public health services," says the open letter, sent by the AMA, American Pharmacists Association (APhA) and the American Nurses Association (ANA).

During the first month of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, race and ethnicity information was missing in nearly half of the vaccination records reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"Health care professionals are critical in asking for the data due to the trust patients have in our work," says the letter. "We encourage clinicians to share with patients in a transparent and culturally sensitive manner why collecting race and ethnicity information can help improve the health of their families and communities. These actions reinforce our commitment to high-quality equitable care."

Why it's important: The pandemic has laid bare pervasive U.S. health inequities. According to the CDC, "There is increasing evidence that some racial and ethnic minority groups are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Inequities in the social determinants of health, such as poverty and health care access, affecting these groups are interrelated and influence a wide range of health and quality-of-life outcomes and risks."

Read more in this *JAMA* Viewpoint, "Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Related to COVID-19."

According to the open letter from the AMA, APhA and ANA, "collecting and analyzing race and ethnicity data can help to ensure accountability to affected communities and to our equity values,

strategies and goals.”

Find out how COVID-19’s unequal impact how is tied to income inequality.

Learn more: AMA Chief Health Equity Officer Aletha Maybank, MD, MPH, discusses the importance of race data and equitable vaccine rollout in a recent episode of the “AMA COVID-19 Update” podcast. [Subscribe now.](#)

The AMA has answered a list of frequently asked questions about health equity and the pandemic and curated information on COVID-19 health equity resources and initiatives across the country.

Find out about a new fellowship that will equip doctors to advance U.S. health equity.

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.