3 insights med students should know in the pursuit for health equity

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Brendan Murphy
Senior News Writer

The past year, marred by a global pandemic, has laid bare the lack of a level playing field for the country’s marginalized communities.

In her role as the AMA’s chief health equity officer overseeing the Association's?Center for Health Equity, Aletha Maybank, MD, MPH, is working to address the systemic inequities in the provision of care. Under Dr. Maybank's leadership, the AMA will release its enterprise-wide Strategic Plan for Embedding Equity in Medicine in Spring 2021

During a recent session at the 2021 AMA Medical Student Advocacy Conference, Dr. Maybank offered insight on the struggles to achieve health equity and how medical students can take up the cause. Here are some key snippets from her session.

The landscape has changed

The past year has enabled a "deeper conversation about equity work and anti-racism and how it's important in getting to equity and justice," Dr. Maybank said. "COVID created that on some level. We now have space to be able to talk directly about these issues. Folks who couldn't say the word 'racism' before are able to say it in their institutions."

Check out this great advice on?how to get involved in advocacy as a medical student.

Everyone has a role

Too often, the work of advancing health equity is not shared evenly.
"This work is really all of our work to do," she said "Allyship has been framed passively, as if a white person needs to wait for us to say something. ... We need people to step up and own the space and say they have their work to do—they have their role. It's too exhausting to do this alone as Black and Brown people."

Follow these tips to effectively lobby lawmakers as a medical student.

**Students have unique opportunity to make change**

"For many of the med students, you all are doing activism," Dr. Maybank said. "Community organizing is a way to keep that relevancy. As med students you have the advantage that you are learning the political system," she added. "It creates so much power and opportunity for you to create change in your profession in a way that hasn't been done before."

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the AMA is carefully compiling critical health equity resources from across the web to shine a light on the structural issues that contribute to and could exacerbate already existing inequities.

Read more from the AMA about COVID-19 vaccination and why collecting race and ethnicity data is critical.