How physicians can help patients overcome generations of trauma

JUN 8, 2021

Staff News Writer

Slavery, forced migration, dispossession, segregation, human experimentation. Traumatic events experienced by patients’ ancestors can cast long shadows over the lives of your patients today, evidenced not just by the stories their communities tell but also by their health outcomes.

The June issue of AMA Journal of Ethics® (@JournalofEthics) explores the phenomenon of transgenerational trauma and how physicians can help change health policy, medical education and clinical practice to account for medicine’s complicity in domestic and international histories of dehumanization. It also offers CME credit.

Articles include:

“What Does It Mean to Heal From Historical Trauma?”
Responding well means navigating ongoing grief, restoring self-community and human-ecological relationships, and generating cultural vibrancy.

“How Should Clinicians Address a Patient’s Experience of Transgenerational Trauma?”
Respecting patient autonomy while seeking to understand patients’ unique perspectives can strengthen patient-surgeon relationships.

“Transgenerational Trauma and Trust Restoration”
Furthering clinicians’ understandings of how daily practice can respond to Black patients’
experiences can help restore trust and mitigate racial and ethnic health inequity.

“How Should Clinicians Respond to Children in Transgenerationally Traumatized Families?”
Pediatricians have obligations to find causes of children’s stress and respond with care to their clinical and social vulnerabilities.

Listen and learn

In the journal’s June podcast, Zoe Tao, MD, who will be entering residency in general surgery at Oregon Health & Science University, and Michael J. Oldani, PhD, a medical anthropologist and director of interprofessional practice and education at Concordia University Wisconsin, discuss how learning about transgenerational trauma can help physicians further health equity, especially among historically marginalized groups, such as Native American and First Nations communities.

Listen to previous episodes of the podcast, “Ethics Talk,” or subscribe in iTunes or other services.

Earn CME

These AMA Journal of Ethics CME modules are each designated by the AMA for a maximum of 1 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™:

- How Should Clinicians Address a Patient’s Experience of Transgenerational Trauma?
- How Should Clinicians Respond to Children in Transgenerationally Traumatized Families?
- Transgenerational Trauma and Trust Restoration

Additionally, the CME module “Ethics Talk: Trauma, Trust, and Pharmaceutical Marketing in Native American and First Nation Communities” is designated by the AMA for a maximum of 0.75 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™.

The offering is part of the AMA Ed Hub™, an online learning platform that brings together high-quality CME, maintenance of certification and educational content—in one place—with relevant learning activities, automated credit tracking and reporting for some states and specialty boards.
Submit manuscripts and artwork

The journal’s editorial focus is on commentaries and articles that offer practical advice and insights for medical students and physicians. Submit a manuscript for publication. The journal also invites original photographs, graphics, cartoons, drawings and paintings that explore the ethical dimensions of health or health care.

A look ahead

Upcoming issues of the AMA Journal of Ethics will focus on illness invisibility and immeasurability, economic decision modeling in health care and implantable material and device regulation. Sign up to receive email alerts when new issues are published.