

Rev up the health tech sector by putting equity at its core

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The AMA has launched an initiative to improve health outcomes for all patients by committing to equitable health innovation opportunities that benefit historically marginalized communities.

The In Full Health Learning and Action Community to Advance Equitable Health Innovation provides a framework for shared understanding and a community for stakeholders committed to putting equity at the center of their decision-making on health innovation investment, development and purchasing.

“It is crucial that we invest in solutions that are created for, with and by communities that have traditionally been sidelined from health innovation resources,” said AMA President-elect Jack Resneck Jr., MD.

“As a component of the AMA’s broader work to advance racial justice and equity in health care, this new initiative will help us continue to drive the future of digital medicine while ensuring health innovation addresses the needs and improves the health of all patients—particularly those who have been most marginalized,” Dr. Resneck added.

Learn about the AMA Center for Health Equity and the AMA’s strategic plan to embed racial justice and advance health equity.

Who is leading the way?

Anyone who funds, develops, buys or influences the ecosystem of health solutions should join the In Full Health Learning and Action Community. That includes physicians.

The community will provide access to experts, mentors, resources and tools. Community members will be able to share lessons learned and challenges with each other, and identify opportunities for collective action and policy change.

A group of 14 founding collaborators has committed to work with the AMA to support and advance the In Full Health principles for equitable health innovation. They are:

- Advanced Medical Technology Association.
- Business Group on Health.
- Digital Medicine Society.
- i.c.stars.
- HealthTech4Medicaid.
- Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society.
- MassChallenge HealthTech.
- MATTER.MedTech Color.
- National Health IT Collaborative for the Underserved.
- Node.Health.
- RockHealth.org.
- Together.Health.
- West Coast Consortium for Technology and Innovation in Pediatrics.

In Full Health will connect “this community of stakeholders around a shared goal of driving equitable resources to health solutions for those historically excluded in the design and profit of innovation,” said AMA Senior Vice President and Chief Health Equity Officer Aletha Maybank, MD, MPH. That includes patients from historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups, people with disabilities and those who identify as LGBTQ+.

About 70% of Americans collectively identify as women, Black, Indigenous, Latinx (a gender-neutral term used to describe people of Latin American heritage), or another community of color. Yet people from these groups are largely excluded from health care venture development, which contributes to the exacerbation of health inequities and impedes efforts to improve the nation’s health.

The business case for equity

The AMA External Equity and Innovation Advisory Group was formed to advise the AMA and helped to develop In Full Health and build a business case for investment in equitable health innovation.

Despite decades of growing investment in health innovation, the U.S. continues to see persistent inequity and worse health than other high-income nations, with the lowest life expectancy, highest chronic disease burden, highest suicide rate and highest rate of avoidable death.

“Those living at the intersection of communities historically marginalized by the health care system experience even worse health outcomes below these dismal national benchmarks,” Dr. Maybank said

at the launch event for In Full Health, held at the ViVE health information technology conference in Miami Beach, Florida.

“Demonstrating impact on the health of populations that have been historically marginalized and underserved can be a source of competitive differentiation,” Dr. Maybank said, calling on stakeholders to commit resources to innovations that measurably improve the health of patients from such communities.

It’s also important for the health industry to engage in an equity-centered design process that properly frames problems and sets priorities. Health innovation funders, solution developers, and customers have a significant opportunity for impact at the organizational level and industry influencers—policymakers, standards-developers and others—are needed to address systems-level barriers and needs.

“Health innovation stakeholders should regularly and transparently assess the impacts of organizational investment, solution development, and/or solution purchasing decisions on—and at the intersection of—historically marginalized communities,” Dr. Maybank said. “This is the first step towards making health care innovation radically more inclusive.”

The launch of the In Full Health Learning and Action Community was announced at the recent ViVE conference. “We invite you to join us in imagining a future in which every person in our country is in full health—a future in which all of us are seen, heard, honored, valued, treated and cared for in full,” Dr. Maybank told the crowd of health industry leaders. “By connecting and being part of this community of stakeholders around a shared goal of driving equitable resources to health solutions for those historically excluded, you can help provide the collective power and capability to bring about change.”

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