During the past couple of years, there have been unexpected trials in health care—especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic. But many young leaders in health care have persevered in their efforts to strengthen their communities, reduce health inequities, and improve outcomes across the U.S.
From left, top row: Faith Crittenden, MD, MPH, S. Monica Soni, MD, Alec Calac; bottom row: Kavita Shah Arora, MD, MBE, MS, Joel A. Bervell, MS, and Tiffani Bell Washington, MD.

Many of these patient advocates, researchers, policymakers and other experts in the medical field were named to the annual list of “40 Under 40 Leaders in Minority Health” set out by the National Minority Quality Forum (NMQF).

Among whom made the NMQF list are physicians who use their positions to lead the charge to improve patient outcomes and build sustainable, healthy communities. Their work highlights the continued need to nurture diversity in their organizations. Among this year’s honorees, six are AMA members and you can learn more about them below.

Yet it is clear that the fundamental drivers of health inequity cannot be surmounted through the outstanding efforts of individual physicians, no matter how talented and committed they are. Learn more about the AMA’s strategic plan to embed racial justice and advance health equity and how the AMA Center for Health Equity is embedding health equity across the organization so that it becomes part of the practice, process, action, innovation, and organizational performance and outcomes.

In addition, the AMA Ed Hub™ Health Equity Education Center equips physicians and other learners with core health equity concepts needed to support them as they continue to take action and confront health injustice. Meanwhile, the AMA’s “Prioritizing Equity” CME video series highlights how COVID-19 and other determinants of health uniquely affect marginalized communities.

6 doctors who are making a difference

Among the NMQF “40 Under 40 Leaders in Minority Health” in 2022 who are AMA members, five also are part of the AMA Ambassador Program, which gives doctors the skills and knowledge to confidently speak to the AMA’s initiatives and the value of AMA membership.

Kavita Shah Arora, MD, MBE, MS, is an ob-gyn and division director for general obstetrics and gynecology at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Dr. Arora serves on the AMA Young Physicians Section Governing Council, as an AMA Ambassador, and her research focuses on reproductive ethics, inequities in postpartum contraception and sterilization, patient-centered quality of care, and ethics education. Learn more about how Dr. Arora is improving health and reducing inequities.

Joel A. Bervell, MS, is a Ghanaian American third-year medical student and social media medical educator at Washington State University Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine. He is currently the AMA Ambassador Program’s Med Student Digital Fellow and co-founded Hugs for, a nonprofit that empowers the next generation of high school global leaders. Bervell also fights racial inequities in

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medicine through education and shares information on his Instagram and TikTok, which named him the top 2021 “Voice for Change.”

Alec Calac, of the Pauma Band of Luiseño Indians, is an MD-PhD student at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science. Calac chairs the AMA Medical Student Section Committee on American Indian Affairs, serves as an AMA Ambassador and his research focuses on medical education and workforce development, tribal public health, vaccine hesitancy and misinformation spread, and social media use. He is also president-elect of the Association of Native American Medical Students. Watch this “Prioritizing Equity” video featuring Calac and others on COVID-19 and the experiences of medical students.

Faith Crittenden, MD, MPH, is a pediatric resident at Yale School of Medicine. Dr. Crittenden chairs the public health committee of the AMA Resident and Fellows Section and played a key role in crafting AMA policy to recognize racism as a public health threat. She is an AMA Ambassador and focuses on educating patients from historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups on diet, nutrition and weight management from a cultural perspective, as well as implementing anti-racism strategies in clinical medicine and highlighting her first-generation experience through narrative medicine.

S. Monica Soni, MD, is an internist and associate chief medical officer at New Century Health in Los Angeles. Dr. Soni works cross functionally in clinical informatics, engagement of physicians and other health professionals, value-based strategies, and innovation. Her focus is to ensure high-quality, cost-effective care for patients and an optimal physician experience.

Tiffani Bell Washington, MD, is a quadruple board-certified physician who specializes in adult, child and adolescent psychiatry, obesity medicine and lifestyle medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. She is serving her second term on the AMA Ambassadors Program Steering Committee. After losing several family members to preventable diseases at a young age, Dr. Bell dedicated her life to maximizing health and limiting the impact of chronic illness in historically marginalized racial and ethnic populations. She also is a founding member of the Pierce Bell Institute of Black Psychiatry, which advocates research and policies that address the unique needs of Black mental health, and has also served as the Resident and Fellow Section representative on the AMA Minority Affairs Governing Council.

Read more about this year’s 40 under 40 and see the full list at NMQF.

Dive into the details of the AMA-sponsored study, “Experiences of Racially and Ethnically Minoritized and Marginalized Physicians in the U.S. During the COVID-19 Pandemic” (PDF).

Also, find out how the AMA Ambassadors and the AMA Minority Affairs Section members give voice to—and advocate for—issues that affect physicians and medical students from historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups.

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