A Google Hangout featuring academic physicians and students Monday took a close look at how medical schools are taking on two huge challenges: addressing health disparities and focusing on diversity in how they train physicians.

Panelists from the University of California Davis School of Medicine, Howard University College of Medicine, and Chicago Medical School at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science shared their insights into developing a diverse student body that is prepared for tomorrow’s patient population. William McDade, MD, PhD, chair of the AMA Council on Medical Education and deputy provost for research and minority issues at the University of Chicago, moderated the hangout.

Here are some real-world solutions these schools have implemented to tackle health disparities:

- Howard offers a preliminary academic reinforcement program, which gives conditional acceptance to certain disadvantaged medical school applicants. These students take a six-week pre-matriculation program and benefit from retention counseling and mentoring to enhance their academic success.

- UC Davis’ new three-year primary care program, called ACE-PC, includes an innovative admissions and recruitment strategy to select students from diverse backgrounds. The goal is to help these students go on to practice in underserved communities as primary care physicians. One-half of the students admitted into the first class of the program are from groups historically underrepresented in medicine. The program is part of the AMA’s Accelerating Change in Medical Education initiative.

“"It’s important that these sorts of curricula last for four years, or three years in our case, and are not one-off or what you do only at orientation or only in this one rotation," said Tonya Fancher, MD, associate professor of internal medicine at UC Davis. “That’s an important commitment that the school makes to this type of work.”

- Chicago Medical School at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science is located in an area with a dense Mexican American population, so students have the option to do
their second-year preceptorships at predominantly Spanish-speaking clinics. Some students also developed a student-run course in medical Spanish.

The focus on Spanish exemplifies the “school’s willingness to take student feedback and actually input it into the med school curriculum,” said Jalia Tucker, a second-year student at Chicago Medical School and a 2014 AMA Foundation Minority Scholar. “We’ll be able to better serve the patients we see at our student-run clinic.”

- To give students experience in culturally sensitive health care delivery, Howard has developed special case vignettes that put students face-to-face with culturally diverse patients.

“Keep in consideration that culturally responsive health care takes into account ethnicity as well as race,” said Walter Bland, MD, associate dean of student affairs and admissions at Howard. “A person may identify as black or Hispanic, but culturally their experiences will differ depending on their ethnicity. … It’s important that we ask questions about health practices and beliefs that might be important to specific populations we’re working with.”

- Mentoring and counseling can help students as well as faculty, said Dr. McDade. The University of Chicago’s Bowman Society brings medical students, residents and faculty together to focus on minority community health care and provide career development to these groups. The program has helped keep minority physicians in academic medicine, Dr. McDade said.

Watch the hangout broadcast to hear even more about how these schools are approaching issues in health care disparities and diversity. The AMA shared more information and solutions in health disparities in a recent Tweet Chat hosted by Finding Answers: Disparities Research for Change. Read the highlights at the AMA’s Storify.

The AMA Minority Affairs Section also is addressing similar issues. The section’s Doctors Back to School program connects minority physicians and medical students with local schools to introduce kids to professional role models and strengthen the pipeline of future doctors. The AMA also is a founding member of the Commission to End Health Care Disparities, which is seeking to better understand and address these disparities in ambulatory clinical practices.

**How do you think medical education should address health care disparities?** Share your thoughts by commenting below at *AMA Wire®* or on the AMA’s Facebook page.


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