African American Medical Societies
African American Medical Societies

• In response to their exclusion from the existing medical societies, African American physicians formed their own medical organizations:

• 1884 - Medico-Chirurgical Society of DC
• 1886 - Lone Star State Medical, Dental, and Pharmaceutical Association (TX)
• 1887 - Old North State Medical Society (NC)
• 1865 - North Jersey National Medical Association (NJ)
Formation of the National Medical Association

- None of the African American medical societies could send delegates to AMA meetings
- 1895 – African American physicians and other professionals formed the National Medical Association
Separate and Unequal Medical Education
African American Medical Schools

• Few African Americans accepted into US medical schools

• Missionary groups founded medical schools that accepted black students:
  • 1868 - Howard University Medical School (DC)
  • 1870 - Lincoln University Medical Department (PA)
  • 1876 - Meharry Medical College (TN)
  • 1882 - Leonard Medical School (NC)
Shaw Hall at Shaw University, Raleigh, NC (ca. 1908)

Source: UNC Chapel Hill Library Collections
First Class of Leonard Medical School at Shaw University, Raleigh, NC (ca.1886)

Source: Shaw University Archives
Faculty of Leonard Medical School at Shaw University, Raleigh, NC (1886)

Source: Shaw University Archives
The AMA and Medical Education

• 1847 - Committee on Medical Education is established
• 1904 - Council on Medical Education (CME) founded
• CME tracked state licensing board failure rates and other statistics
• CME created grading system to rate schools
African American Medical Schools and the CME Rating System

• African American schools lacked the financial resources to comply with rising educational standards
• AMA rated all African American schools in bottom third of US schools
• Licensure failure rates for graduates of African American schools were over 20%
AMA Approaches Carnegie Foundation

• AMA’s rating system was seen by many as not objective
• AMA asks Carnegie Foundation to sponsor a survey of medical schools in US and Canada
• Survey was meant to promote work of the Council on Medical Education
Abraham Flexner

- Educator from Louisville
- Carnegie Foundation hired Flexner to head study
- The CME Secretary accompanied Flexner on site visits
- Flexner wrote most of his report at AMA headquarters

Source: Rockefeller Archive Center
http://www.hbci.com/~wenonah/history/img/flexner.jpg
MEDICAL EDUCATION
IN THE
UNITED STATES AND CANADA
A REPORT TO
THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING
BY
ABRAHAM FLEXNER
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
HENRY S. PRITCHETT
PRESIDENT OF THE FOUNDATION
Flexner Report: Principle Findings

• In the US, “physicians are four or five times [too] numerous”

• Many poor quality schools
  – 90% have inadequate admission standards
  – Many lacked adequately trained faculty
  – Most had inadequate course offerings
  – Many lacked adequate laboratory facilities

• Close weak schools, focus resources on stronger schools
Flexner Report: Women’s Medical Education

- 80% of women attend “coeducational institutions”
- Close all medical schools for women
- Integrate women into predominantly male medical schools
Flexner Report: “Negro” Medical Education

- **Separate**
  - “the practice of the negro physician will be limited to his own race”

- **Different education**
  - “negro doctors” should become sanitarians

- Close 5 of the 7 historically African American medical schools

- Support only Howard University Medical School and Meharry Medical College
  - Though they will be “unequal to the need”
  - “the medical care of the negro race will never be left wholly to negro physicians”
Aftermath of Flexner Report

• N.B. Part of much larger picture of the evolution of medical education (esp. integration of labs, hospitals, universities, etc)

• With specific regard to AA medical education
  – White medical schools were funded first
  – Flexner did not immediately recommend adequate funding for Howard or Meharry
  – African American schools struggled financially
  – CME kept up pressure for educational reform through their annual evaluations
  – CME continued to give African American medical schools low ratings
By 1923

Among the US medical schools operating in 1910...

51 of the 131 (40%) **total schools** closed

5 of the 7 (71%) **African American schools** closed
Meharry Medical College, Nashville, TN (ca. 1895)

Source: UNC Chapel Hill Library Collections
Howard University Medical College,
Washington, DC (ca. 1867)

Source: Howard University Archives
Outcome for Howard and Meharry

- Howard University Medical School and Meharry Medical College survived
- But both schools struggled financially

- As late as the 1970s, Howard and Meharry educated over 2/3 of all African American medical students admitted per year in the US.
The AMA Directory and “Colored” Physicians
NMA Relations with AMA

• NMA struggled during its first decades of existence, unable even to meet each year

• NMA rarely mentioned in AMA records

• Few NMA-AMA interactions between 1895 and World War II
Racial Designations in the American Medical Directory

- 1906 - AMA began publishing a Directory, which listed all US physicians

- The Directory listed black physicians as “colored”

- Effect on black physicians:
  - More difficult, or impossible, to obtain malpractice insurance and credit
NMA Protests “col.” Designations

• 1931 - AMA at first refused to meet with NMA to discuss the issue
  – AMA Board did “not feel disposed to make any change in its … policy of designating colored physicians.”
• AMA eventually sought different ways of designating black physicians
• 1939 - After NMA protests drew media attention, the AMA stopped listing African American physicians as “col.”