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Message from the CMO

Welcome to the sixth issue of ***The Bridge!*** We hope this newsletter keeps you updated, informed, and the connected with the NYC Health Department and the Office of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO). Your input and collaboration are vital to our mission of protecting and promoting the health of all New Yorkers. We would love to hear from you—please share your thoughts and feedback on what else you would like to see in this newsletter, or inquire about how to connect with the Health Department by emailing us at chiefmedicalofficer@health.nyc.gov

Thank you for your partnership and commitment to a more just and equitable New York City!

CMO Strategic Plan Updates

Read below to learn more about each domain of the CMO Strategic Plan.

Domain 1: Bridging Public Health and Health Care

This fall is the two-year anniversary of the [Coalition to End Racism in Clinical Algorithms](#) (CERCA). We are thrilled to announce that the CMO Office received a \$2.9 million grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation to support the safety-net hospital systems in CERCA. The grant focuses on developing and implementing comprehensive evaluation plans with consultants (e.g. from the New York Academy of Medicine) to measure the impact of de-implementing race-based clinical algorithms in patient care in estimated Glomerular Filtration Rate (eGFR), Vaginal Birth After C-Section (VBAC) and Pulmonary Function Tests (PFT). The safety-net hospitals within CERCA, which disproportionately serve more people of color, Medicaid, and uninsured patients will receive additional support in advancing their CERCA deliverables considering the profound impact on the communities they serve.

Additionally, as we look towards the next iteration of CERCA, we are eager to announce that our newest upcoming sub-group will focus on Race-Based Prescribing in Hypertension. Current practice guidelines (i.e., JNC-8) recommend that Black patients with hypertension without co-morbidities initially be treated with a thiazide diuretic or a calcium channel blocker while non-Black patients are initially offered ACE-inhibitors. This is based on the [2002 ALLHAT Trial](#), a randomized controlled trial that set out to determine the optimal first step in therapy for hypertension. Using race incorrectly as a proxy for biology has coincided with a [decline in hypertension control](#), while also limiting treatment options for Black patients. Updating our guidelines is long overdue. An individualized approach to HTN therapy for all patients has been shown to be more important than race-based guidelines. The CMO Office is excited to see the progress and change from this future subgroup.

Domain 2: Advancing the NYC Health Department's Commitment to Anti-racism in Public Health Practice and Policy

On Friday, June 23rd, 2023, the office of the CMO in partnership with the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, AAMC, and the Fund for Public Health NYC, hosted the [Inaugural NYC Anti-Racism in Medical Education Symposium](#) at Hostos Community College in the Bronx. The purpose of the event was to create a safe space among faculty and student leaders to discuss obstacles and successes to implementing anti-racism praxis in medical school curricula especially as it relates to the work of CERCA. The convening consisted of a series of reflections from leaders in the field, panel discussions, poster presentations, and break-out discussion groups centered on removing race from clinical algorithms and the harmful concepts of race essentialism. At the end of the convening, attendees were asked to commit for the next 12 months to specific actions and goals, inspired by themes that emerged in the critical conversations.

We are grateful to our presenters [Dr. Salihah Dick](#), Asthma Program Manager at the Bronx Neighborhood Health, famed TikTok medical myth buster & medical student at Washington State University - Elyson S. Floyd College of Medicine, [Joel Bervell](#), and our keynote Speaker, [Dr. Malika Fair](#), Senior Director of Health Equity Partnerships and Programs at the Association of American Medical Colleges and [Dr. Michelle Morse](#), our Chief Medical Officer and Deputy Commissioner of the Center for Health Equity and Community Wellness who helped to close us out. We are inspired by our [Inaugural NYCAMES 2023 - Student Panel](#) representing: Omonike Oyelola | Institute for Healing & Justice in Medicine; Rohini Silva | American Medical Student Association; Jerrel Catlett | RBI x CAP Fellowship at the Icahn School of Medicine; Maya Vasser | Committee of Anti Racism and Allyship at Hofstra/ Northwell Zucker School of Medicine; Christine Lopez | Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai / Latino Medical Student Association / East Harlem Health Outreach Partnership (EHHOP) and [faculty panelists](#) representing: Carmen Green, MD | CUNY School of Medicine Sophie Davis; Hetty Cunningham, MD | Columbia Vagelos College of Physicians & Surgeons; Joseph Truglio, MD | Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai; Carla Boutin-Foster, MD | SUNY Downstate; Gwendolyne Jack, MD | Weill Cornell Medical College; who all continue to demonstrate unbelievable determination and resilience in the fight for justice in medicine. Furthermore, thank you to all our committed attendees who spent the day with us resolving to make their institutions equitable for all.

Domain 3: Building Institutional Accountability

Building institutional accountability requires that as an agency, bureau, and division we hold a mirror to ourselves. It also requires a framework that acknowledges the harm done, offers a space for truths to be spoken and provide a path to reconciliation. Healing Justice is a framework for addressing the collective harm and trauma caused by systemic oppression. It's holistic approach to healing emphasizes the interconnectedness of physical, emotional, spiritual, and environmental well-being. In keeping with our commitment to building institutional accountability, Center for Health Equity and Community Wellness (CHECW) hosted two, four-week healing justice sessions led by practitioner Adaku Utah. [Please see her biography here.](#)

Adaku Utah led staff members through guided self-reflection exercises and collective practices for resilience. The restorative healing justice workshops worked to address the complex workplace trauma due to COVID -19, staffing shortages and the complex reality of creating sustainable workplace environments that support truth and reconciliation. Our hope is to continue to transform our division into a supportive work environment that promotes health and wellness not only in our communities but within the walls of our agency.

NYC Health's Chief Medical Officer Convenings with Safety Net Hospitals

The NYC Health Department is hosting safety net hospital convenings which focus on sharing situational updates, promoting best practices, and identifying ways to promote increased resources for safety net hospitals. Convenings will be held bimonthly with each session spotlighting one safety net program, sharing public and private resources, and providing health department updates. The first convening was held on August 4th and covered a presentation on the [SBH wellness centers](#), [COVID-19 updates](#), and our [Data Collection for Equity project](#). We are looking forward to using this space to share resources, highlight key priorities and provide support to strengthen the NYC safety net system.

New tools and campaigns:

Recent publications, resources & agency updates

- [Air Quality HAN](#)
- [City Health Information \(June 2023\)](#)
- [CME Resources](#)
- [Changes to Blood Donor eligibility](#)

Information on Upcoming Events

NYC REACH is working with [Reproductive Health Education in Family Medicine \(RHEDI\)](#) to host an abortion access ally training for our primary care providers. Since the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in June 2022, abortion care across the country has become increasingly limited. RHEDI and the NYC Health Department invite you to join a virtual training on **Thursday, September 21st at noon** to learn about how to support and refer patients for abortions. The training is tailored to non-abortion providers to learn about the following:

- Basic introduction to abortion methods, counseling, referrals
- Pre- and post-abortion care
- Legal and ethical context to help providers avoid criminalizing and stigmatizing language
- Dispel common myths and share facts about abortion care
- Suggested language around abortion care

Register for the free virtual training [here](#).

Public Health Corps in Your Borough

September 16th (SATURDAY) BROOKLYN | 11 AM - 4 PM

Address: Bedford District Health Office Parking Lot 485 Throop Ave. (between Putnam Ave. and Madison St.) Brooklyn, NY 11221

September 30th (SATURDAY) BRONX | 12 PM - 6 PM

Address: Walter Gladwin Park Entrance on the corner of East 176th Street and Arthur Avenue Bronx, NY 10457

October 5th (THURSDAY) STATEN ISLAND | 2 PM - 6 PM *(awaiting park permit confirmation)*

Address: Tappen Park, Bay St, Staten Island, NY 10304

October 25th (WEDNESDAY) | QUEENS | 2 PM - 6 PM (indoors)

Address: Queens Borough Hall Atrium located at 120-55 Queens Blvd, Queens, NY 11424

HARLEM | 3 PM - 6 PM | TBD

Address: James Weldon Johnson Playground Lexington Ave and East 115th St. New York, NY 10029

Updates on recent community events

On **May 19th**, the CMO Office hosted our tenth **CERCA Meeting**, where we welcomed Dr. Stephanie Lovinsky-Desir Chief of Pediatric Pulmonary Division at Columbia University Medical School to discuss the American Thoracic Society's [latest statement](#) on the Use of Race and Ethnicity in Pulmonary Function Test and Interpretation. Additionally, the CMO office provided an update on ongoing CERCA evaluation efforts.

On **July 14th**, the CMO office in partnership with Health and Hospitals invited **Dr. Lovinsky Desir** back for a CMO special lecture to broaden the audience for the discussion of the American Thoracic Society's statement on race adjustment in Pulmonary Function Tests.

On **May 28th**, Finding a Living Kidney Donor at Flatbush YMCA The National Kidney Foundation in partnership with the YMCA hosted, Big Ask Big Give: First Steps to Transplant at the Flatbush YMCA of Greater New York. The event offered educational resources for individuals and their families to find a kidney donor and learn about the transplant process.

On **June 28th**, the Brownsville Health Action Center hosted their annual Health Block party. Over 20 vendors came to offer social services information, health bucks for organic food, helmets for youth, meditations and much much more.

On **June 27th**, the CMO Office attended the [Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's](#) symposium focusing on grantee institutions who are presently addressing race in clinical algorithms. To our knowledge, the CMO Office's CERCA initiative is the only institution nationwide presently focusing on implementation of non-race based clinical algorithms and specifically supporting safety-net hospitals in this work. Sessions focused on (1) considering how race among other social determinants of health negatively impact health and wellness of patients (2) what is being done across the country in clinical algorithms and practice surrounding race (3) break out groups were a detailed conversation on what needs to happen at an intuitional level specifically in the implementation, research and evaluation of patient care as it relates to the use of race-based clinical algorithms. The overall reflection on the day's programming was a consensus that racism is a unique risk factor aside from social determinants of health that requires separate and intentional effort to address racial inequities in various disease states. The CMO Office believes racism remains a unique factor that must be uniquely and comprehensively addressed in order to make impactful and lasting outcomes among patients and communities of color.

New Releases, Updates, and Recent Events

On October 19th, 2023 as part of a [national NKF Collective Impact strategy](#), Greater New York stakeholders are hosting a leadership summit on ending disparities and inequities in chronic kidney disease. [Register here!](#) This will be accomplished by implementing a roadmap to drive a cultural shift in primary care - toward increasing the early diagnosis and management of CKD, especially in black communities and other communities of color disproportionately burdened by CKD.