



February 2021 Edition

February is Black History Month – an opportunity for us to celebrate the culture and achievements of Black communities and to reflect on their role throughout U.S. history. The first Black History Month was celebrated in 1970, stemming from a week called “Negro History Week,” which dated back to 1926. The original purpose of this week was to educate Americans about Black history and recognize Black accomplishments and contributions to White-dominated fields, including medicine.

It is important for us, as a healthcare organization, to recognize the many [contributions of Black Americans to medicine](#) and also reflect on the historical and ongoing impact that racism within the medical profession has had on Black communities. Black Americans have suffered from a long [history of medical injustice](#) and abuse (e.g., the Tuskegee study 1933-1972, experimental operations by J. Marion Sims from 1845-1849) and continue to face discrimination in health care today. As we continue to work together with our members to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, reduce health disparities, and improve health equity, we need to consider how this history impacts the path forward for our members and patients.



AFRICAN AMERICAN
PIONEERS IN MEDICINE

Spotlight on Vaccine Hesitancy

With the rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations, vaccine safety is a significant concern for Black patients. A recent [survey](#) by the Pew Research Center found that only 42% of Black Americans would get a vaccine if it were available to them today, despite significantly higher hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19 among Black patients compared to other populations. This vaccine hesitancy may not be so surprising when put into the context of historical injustices against Black patients. A [poll](#) by the Kaiser Family Foundation and The Undeclared found 70% of Black Americans believe that people are treated unfairly based on race or ethnicity when they seek medical care. Building trust within Black communities will be crucial for widespread vaccine uptake – an area that we can help our members focus on as they roll out vaccine distribution efforts. (See DE&I Committee resources below.)

Resources of the Month

DE&I Committee February Picks:

- **News:** Tackling COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy among Black Americans ([Learn More](#))
- **News:** Black Doctors' Group Takes Aim at COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy ([Learn More](#))
- **For Fun:** 5 Ways You Can Celebrate Black History Month Virtually ([Learn More](#))
- **For Fun:** 10 Little Known Black History Facts ([Learn More](#))

Staff Submissions

- **Book:** Small Great Things: A Novel by Jodi Picoult ([Library](#) | [Amazon](#))
- **Book:** A Kids Book about Racism ([Learn More](#))
- **News:** Emmett Till's Home Declared a Landmark in Chicago ([Learn More](#))
- **Video:** How Netflix Is Addressing Workplace Inequality ([Learn More](#))
- **Journal Article:** Recalibrating the Use of Race in Medical Research ([Learn More](#))

Do you have a resource you want to see in the next edition of the *DE&I Digest*? Next month, we'll be celebrating **Women's History Month**! Send resources to DEICommittee@amga.org for review by the DE&I Committee. Please ensure resources submitted are from reputable sources.

Raise Your Cultural IQ!

Did You Know?



Henrietta Lacks, a Black woman born in 1921, was the source of an “immortal” line of stem cells, known as HeLa cells. The line originated when doctors took samples of her cancerous cells shortly

before her death. Her cells were surprisingly able to survive and reproduce in the lab, and they still remain intact today. HeLa cells have been used for medical research for decades, including recent research regarding COVID-19 vaccines. However, the HeLa cell line also represents unethical treatment stemming from racial inequities in health care. Not only were the cells taken without Lacks' consent, but their use over the years has often occurred without the Lacks family's consent, credit, or profit, despite public and commercial use. With new COVID-19 vaccine research in the spotlight, many Black Americans are forced to reckon with a history of injustice in medicine, down to some of the very cells used in vaccine research.

[Learn More about Henrietta Lacks](#)

Something to Celebrate!

While it's important to acknowledge all of the DE&I work that needs to be done, it's also important to celebrate wins along the way. This section will highlight good news each month – proof that there is always progress to celebrate!

- **Member News:** [Kaiser Commits \\$8.1M for Racial Equity across U.S.](#)
 - **State News:** [Black History Edits Made to Virginia Schools Curriculum](#)
 - **Federal News:** [Executive Order on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation](#)
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Questions? Comments? Suggestions? We'd love to hear from you! Email the DE&I Committee at DEICommittee@amga.org

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