

Advocacy and Remedies for Healthcare Disparities

In recent years a substantial body of evidence has emerged documenting disparities in health outcomes and in access to healthcare for individuals of different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. These disparities cannot be explained by variation in clinical conditions. Numerous institutions including the National Institutes of Health, the Institute of Medicine, and the American Medical Association have all expressed concern over these findings. Thus, when the opportunity arose to publish papers stemming from 2 conferences related to health disparities, we were extremely excited. The first conference, held in February of 2000, was the Conference on Diversity and Communication in Health Care: Addressing Race/Ethnicity, Language and Social Class in Health Care Disparities. It was sponsored by the Office of Minority Health in the Department of Health and Human Services, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the Health Resources and Services Administration, The Commonwealth Fund, and the Sergei Zlinkoff Fund for Medical Education and Research. The second conference, held in March 2003, was the Inaugural Forum on Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care and was sponsored by the National Managed Health Care Congress and AmeriHealth Mercy, a large Medicaid managed care organization. The impetus to collect and publish these papers came from Olivia Carter-Pokras, PhD, a participant at the conferences and an associate professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. We thank her for her efforts in bringing this special issue to us.

The papers published from these conferences are a bit different than the types of papers we generally publish. They are not original empirical research studies, but instead reflect the opinions of national experts and the literature in this area. They suggest ways that health disparities may be addressed, and because of this, these papers were evaluated more for their educational merit and their informational contribution to our audience. As such, the *Journal* is happy to serve as the vehicle to disseminate this information and hope, given the importance of this topic, that our audience finds the papers useful and informative.



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This issue was supported by a contract to the University of Maryland School of Medicine from the Office of Minority Health, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.