

Diversity and Inclusivity Are Essential to the Future of Dermatology

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Over the last 5 years, there has been an important dialogue among dermatologists about diversity in our specialty that has shifted the mind-set of the dermatology community and highlighted an intent to build a diverse workforce. It is important to reflect on this effort and acknowledge the progress that has been made. Additionally, it also is important to envision what our ideal specialty will look like 10 years from now and to discuss specific ways that we can achieve that vision for the future of dermatology.

At the 2015 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), Bruce E. Wintroub, MD, highlighted the importance of diversity in dermatology when he presented the Clarence S. Livingood lecture.¹ His discussion was followed by a call to action from Pandya et al² in 2016, which described the lack of diversity in our specialty (the second least diverse specialty in medicine) and proposed specific steps that can be taken by individuals and organizations to address the issue. In line with this effort, the AAD's Diversity Task Force, Diversity Mentorship Program,³ and Diversity Champion Initiative were created. The latter program enlisted dermatology residency programs across the country to select a diversity champion who would lead efforts to increase diversity in each participating department, including mentorship of underrepresented-in-medicine college and medical students. The AAD's 2019 Diversity Champion Workshop⁴ (September 12–13, 2019) will be held for the first time prior to the Association of Professors of Dermatology Annual Meeting (September 13–14, 2019) in an attempt to scale up the Diversity Champion Initiative. This workshop has galvanized widespread support and will be collaboratively hosted by the AAD, Association of Professors of Dermatology, Skin of Color Society, Society for Investigative Dermatology, and Women's Dermatologic Society.

Current diversity efforts have largely focused on increasing representation in the dermatology workforce. A publication in 2017 challenged the tenets of dermatology resident selection and advocated for holistic review of residency program applicants as one way to address the lack of diversity in dermatology.⁵ This viewpoint highlighted that dermatology's traditional focus on US Medical Licensing Examination scores and Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society membership leads to bias^{6–8}; the viewpoint proposed several ways to change the resident selection process to enhance diversity.⁵ A recent proposal to eliminate numerical scores on the US Medical Licensing Examination Step 1 and move to a pass/fail grading system aligns well with this viewpoint.⁹ Defining best practices to perform holistic reviews is an ongoing effort and challenge for many programs, one that will be discussed at the AAD's 2019 Diversity Champion Workshop. Implementing best practices will require individual residency programs to develop review processes tailored to departmental resources and strengths. Achieving increased representation must be an active process starting with an explicit commitment to improving diversity.

Through these efforts, we are poised to improve our specialty; however, it is critical to recognize that simply increasing the number of underrepresented dermatologists is not enough to improve diversity in dermatology. What does meaningful change look like? In 10 years, we hope that, in addition to a more inclusive workforce, we will see expanded diversity efforts beyond race and ethnicity; improved cultural competence within dermatology departments and organizations that creates more inclusive places to work, learn, and practice medicine; intentional broader representation in dermatology leadership; high-quality, evidence-based, inclusive, and culturally competent education, patient care, and

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research; and equal and improved outcomes for all of our patients, particularly those who traditionally experience health care disparities. To this end, ensuring diversity in research and publications is paramount. Academic journals should be actively working to include articles in the literature that help us better understand health care differences, including research that examines the presentations of skin disease in a broad spectrum of study populations, as well as to spotlight and solicit content from diverse voices. Inclusion of a diverse range of participants in research based on human subjects should be a requirement for publication, which would ensure more generalizable data. Diversity in clinical trials is improving,¹⁰ but more effort should be devoted to further increasing diversity in medical research. In particular, we need to broaden the inclusivity of dermatology research efforts and outcomes data to include more patients with skin of color as well as other underrepresented groups, thus helping to improve our understanding of the differential effects of certain interventions.

We also must educate trainees and practicing dermatologists to better understand the diagnosis and management of skin diseases in all populations; to this end, it is essential to develop a culturally competent curriculum and continuing medical education on diseases of the skin and hair that affect patients with skin of color as well as cutaneous conditions that present in groups such as sexual and gender minorities.^{11,12} All dermatologists—not just the experts in academic skin of color and other specialty clinics—should have expertise in the dermatologic care of diverse patients.

We have made notable and important strides with regard to diversity in dermatology by beginning this conversation, identifying problems, coming up with solutions, and implementing them.¹³ This progress has been made

relatively quickly and is commendable; however, we have more work to do before our specialty is inclusive of underrepresented-in-medicine physicians and provides excellent care to all patients.

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