



University of Pittsburgh

Health Sciences

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June 2, 2020

Dear Health Sciences Students, Faculty and Staff,

The events of the past week, and the many, many like it, are reason for pain, grief, rage, and shame. While, to quote President Obama, “It will fall mainly on the officials of Minnesota to ensure that the circumstances surrounding George Floyd's death are investigated thoroughly and that justice is ultimately done, ...it falls on all of us, regardless of our race or station...to work together to create a ‘new normal’ in which the legacy of bigotry and unequal treatment no longer infects our institutions or our hearts.”

We recognize that health care, as many systems and institutions, has a deeply flawed history and that the health of many people in this nation are impacted by ongoing injustice and inequity related to the places they live, the air they breathe, the education they receive, the jobs they do, and the biases of the people they encounter every day, all of which is perpetuated by established policies and institutions. It's essential that we in health care increase our understanding of these social, economic and cultural determinants of health and how our current structures, including those within health care delivery systems, work against huge segments of our people.

We are increasing our attention to addressing bias, both conscious and unconscious, in our faculty, students, and staff, and are asking our colleagues within the administration at UPMC to help us address it among patients. These efforts include implementing broad-based bystander intervention and bias mitigation training for students, residents, faculty, and staff. We are working to add more information about structural racism and health disparities to the curriculum and appreciate the faculty, staff, students, and committees engaged in that work. We welcome all who wish to be a part of these efforts.

We will continue to provide increased support for all students, especially those who identify as members of marginalized groups, and we urge all members of our school community

to check in on each other to provide additional support. As always, the Counseling Center (students) and Life Solutions (faculty and staff) remain available to assist.

Opportunities for dialog are critical as we move forward. We encourage you to participate in the campus Town Hall at 12pm on Wed June 3, “I Can’t Breathe: From Agony to Activism,” hosted by Health Sciences Diversity and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Panelists include counseling, public safety, local political and community organizing professionals. You may register here:
<https://calendar.pitt.edu/event/i-cant-breathe-from-agony-to-activism#.XtZZ8MApCUk>

The City of Pittsburgh Gender Equity Commission's report, "Pittsburgh's Inequality Across Race and Gender" lays out very clearly how much needs to change in our community. The Schools of the Health Sciences, along with Pitt as a whole, and UPMC are positioned to play a crucial role in making those changes happen. It is our intent to be engaged in the transformation of our communities.

Sincerely,

Anantha Shekhar, MD, PhD
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John and Gertrude Petersen Dean, School of Medicine
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