



MINNESOTA
MEDICAL
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**UCare and the Minnesota Medical Association collaborate
on health and racial equity initiative**

***Mission-driven organizations strive to mitigate bias
and foster anti-racist cultures among health care providers***

MINNEAPOLIS, Mar. 2, 2021 — Recognizing that Minnesota has some of the worst health disparities in the country – especially among Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities – UCare and the Minnesota Medical Association (MMA) have launched a two-year initiative to promote health and racial equity and improve health outcomes in traditionally underserved and diverse populations. The initiative focuses on mitigating physician and other health professional biases as a contributing factor in health outcomes and supports the adoption of an anti-racist culture by Minnesota health care organizations. Its goal is to begin dismantling some of the key elements of structural racism present in Minnesota’s health care system.

This work comes at a time when Minnesotans from BIPOC communities are experiencing shorter life spans, and higher rates of infant mortality and diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer than their white peers.¹ These racial disparities are rooted in longstanding patterns of bias and discrimination in the health care system, reflecting broader structural racism in our society. In addition to impacting the shared aspiration for better health for all Minnesotans, these inequities have economic consequences on workforces and the affordability of health insurance. For example, a University of Minnesota health disparities study found that preventable deaths caused by racial disparities cost the state from \$1.2 to \$2.9 billion each year.²

“There is much to do and undo to create a more just and fair health care system for all Minnesotans. We are excited to join with the MMA to break new ground in support of UCare’s strategic health and racial equity imperative,” said Mark Traynor, UCare President and Chief Executive Officer.

“Thanks to the generous support of the UCare Foundation, this funding will help us impact a key contributing factor to inequities in health – physician and other health professional biases, and will

¹ Minnesota Department of Health. Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative: Report to the Legislature. March 2019.

also allow us to shine light on medicine's role in perpetuating discrimination and racism in health care," said Marilyn Peitso, MD, MMA president.

UCare Chief Medical Officer Julia Joseph-Di Caprio, MD, and UCare Health Equity Officer Pleasant Radford Jr., MBA, will collaborate closely with the MMA's Health Equity Coordinating Council. "The root causes of health and racial inequities arise from structural racism and implicit bias in the health care system. This unique partnership with the MMA is a collaborative effort to dismantle structural racism in health care settings, reduce implicit bias with our health care providers and make demonstrable improvement in the health outcomes of our BIPOC communities," said Radford.

Together, the organizations will:

- Develop and disseminate implicit bias and anti-racism educational resources and tools for providers
- Establish and facilitate cross-organizational communication and exchange of health equity initiatives, practices and policies
- Explore and develop community-wide metrics for accountability
- Identify opportunities for the use of restorative justice models to facilitate trust building between BIPOC communities and Minnesota health care organizations

This work builds on a previous grant provided by UCare to the MMA for the curation, development and promotion of a variety of Continuing Medical Education (CME)-accredited implicit bias and anti-racism educational resources. In total, the UCare Foundation is contributing more than \$200,000 to support these efforts.

About UCare

[UCare](#) is an independent, nonprofit health plan providing health care and administrative services to more than 540,000 members throughout Minnesota and parts of western Wisconsin. UCare partners with health care providers, counties, and community organizations to create and deliver Medicare, Medicaid and Individual & Family health plans. All of its plans are National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) certified.

The health plan addresses health care disparities and care access issues through a broad array of community initiatives. UCare has received Top Workplaces honors from the Star Tribune for 11 consecutive years since the rankings began in 2010.

About the Minnesota Medical Association

The [Minnesota Medical Association](#) is a non-profit professional association representing physicians, residents and medical students. With more than 10,000 members, the MMA is dedicated to being the leading voice of medicine to make Minnesota the healthiest state and the best place to practice.

² University of Minnesota Department of Family Medicine and Community Health. The Economic Benefits of Reducing Racial Disparities in Health: The Case of Minnesota. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2019**, *16*(5), 742; <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16050742>

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