

# Diversity and Inclusion in Health Care



## GENERAL OVERVIEW

The United States will not have a single racial or ethnic majority by the year 2055. Research shows that certain health conditions affect some ethnicities more than others, and social determinants of health (e.g. socioeconomic status, education, and social support networks) can affect health equity in terms of how individuals can access quality health care. Diversity and inclusion challenges facing the health care industry are two-fold: 1) addressing how to provide care to a patient population that's diverse in race and social determinants and 2) increasing the diversity of the physician workforce to reflect the communities they serve.

Diversity and inclusion are the cornerstone of Kaiser Permanente's integrated care model. The Permanente Medical Groups (PMGs), in conjunction with Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and Hospitals (KFHP/H), foster an environment among physicians and care teams with culturally responsive care at its core – providing care in multiple languages, educating doctors and other care team members about racial and gender biases, addressing social determinants, and closing care gaps for underserved populations.

## QUICK FACTS



- Three out of seven physician chief executives leading the various Permanente Medical Groups are women.

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- Kaiser Permanente's ranking on the 2017 Top 50 Companies for Diversity list issued by DiversityInc.



- Kaiser Permanente Southern California in 2011 received the "Multicultural Health Care Distinction" by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCOA), which recognizes health organizations for their ability to address the health care needs of minority populations through use of evidence-based requirements.

## How Kaiser Permanente Addresses This Issue

Every Kaiser Permanente region follows the mission of culturally responsive care. For example, several medical facilities are home to Culturally Competent Care clinics serving Latino, Chinese, African-American, Armenian, Vietnamese, and LGBT communities. Member communications are printed in various languages, and Member Services call centers are staffed with team members fluent in more than 140

languages. Groups work across PMGs to address health disparities, such as improving the hypertension screening rates of African Americans.

In 2017, Northwest Permanente (NWP) – the physician group providing care to Kaiser Permanente members in Oregon and southern Washington – supported Oregon Senate Bill 558, "Cover All

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Kids,” which provides health care to all children regardless of their residency status. The bill will extend health care coverage through the Oregon Health Plan for all children living at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level, or about 17,000 children.

Many PMGs provide diversity and inclusion resources, such as the Southern California Permanente Medical Group’s (SCPMG) Center for Diversity, Inclusion, and Health Equity. Additionally, SCPMG’s “Poverty Simulations” is an innovative seminar where volunteer physicians and employees are formed into “families” and given role-playing scenarios of circumstances often faced daily by people living in poverty. PMG leadership also invests in educational programs such as “The Science of Bias” or “Implicit Bias.”

*“We must continuously strive to be the best versions of ourselves and of the organization we can be.”*

– Imelda Dacones, MD, president and CEO, Northwest Permanente

Many PMGs also offer courses to allow physicians to gain additional language skills and certifications for the medical environment. For example, SCPMG encourages doctors to learn another language by sponsoring educational programs or providing financial incentives. The NWP language concordance program allows physicians to certify in their native or fluent languages to eliminate unnecessary costs for translation services.

## On the Horizon

Several PMGs, in collaboration with their co-located KFHP/H, are developing innovative training programs to help better understand bias. For example, in some regions physicians participate in the NeuroLeadership Institute (NIL) Pilot Program, a national effort that brings neuroscience research into leadership practice to help build inclusive habits and break bias in business decisions. NWP, together with the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Northwest, awards scholarships to diverse students from traditionally underserved populations seeking health care careers. The Kaiser Permanente School of Medicine, scheduled to open in Pasadena, California, brings together PMG physicians to plan and develop the curriculum and support diversity by incorporating health equity awareness in the training for future doctors.

## Selected Publications

Dacones, Imelda. “At KP, Our Strength Lies in Our Diversity.” LinkedIn. August 18, 2017. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/kp-our-strength-lies-diversity-imelda-dacones>

Chevez, Shari G. “Grounding Medical Students in Diversity, Inclusion, and Health Equity.” Permanente Medicine. August 3, 2017. <https://permanente.org/inside-perspective-shari-g-chevez-md/>

## Permanente Physician Experts

Our physician experts are available to discuss diversity and inclusion in health care.



Imelda Dacones, MD, president and CEO, Northwest Permanente



Margaret Ferguson, MD, executive medical director, Colorado Permanente Medical Group

## About the Permanente Medical Groups

The Permanente Medical Groups are composed of more than 21,000 physicians. Our mission is to improve the health of our patients and the communities in which we provide care. We practice in eight self-governed, physician-led, prepaid, multi-specialty medical groups that work with the Kaiser Foundation Health Plans and Kaiser Foundation Hospitals to provide care for more than 11.8 million Kaiser Permanente members. We work collaboratively, enabled by state-of-the-art facilities and technology, to provide preventive and world-class complex care in eight states – from Hawaii to Maryland – and the District of Columbia.

## About The Permanente Federation

In 1997, the Permanente Medical Groups formed The Permanente Federation LLC to represent their shared interests. The Federation serves as the key partner on behalf of the medical groups with Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and Kaiser Foundation Hospitals on national initiatives.

Please visit [permanente.org](https://permanente.org).

