

Equity, Inclusion and Diversity 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. Equity, inclusion, and diversity challenges facing the health care community 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. In 2018, Kaiser Permanente received the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' inaugural Health Equity Award for its commitment to reducing and eliminating disparities in health care quality and access to care.

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 (NCQA), 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.

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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 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.

“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

A number of Permanente physicians serve on Kaiser Permanente’s National Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Council, which leads the implementation of the organization’s equity, inclusion, and diversity strategy, developing key initiatives and providing expert consultation throughout the enterprise. In addition, several PMGs provide diversity and inclusion resources within their groups. SCPMG’s “Poverty Simulations” are innovative seminars 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.”

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

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, NWP, together with the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Northwest, awards scholarships to diverse students from traditionally underserved populations seeking health care careers.

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/>



About the Permanente Medical Groups

The Permanente Medical Groups are composed of more than 22,000 physicians dedicated to the mission of improving the health of our patients and the communities in which we provide care. We practice in eight self-governed, physician-led, prepaid, multispecialty medical groups. Together with the Kaiser Foundation Health Plans and Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, we are Kaiser Permanente – an award-winning health care system that delivers Permanente Medicine to more than 12.2 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

The Permanente Federation LLC (the Federation) is the national leadership and consulting organization for the eight Permanente Medical Groups (PMGs), which, together with the Kaiser Foundation Health Plans and Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, comprise Kaiser Permanente. The PMGs employ more than 22,000 physicians, approximately 90,000 nurses, other clinicians and staff, and provide care to over 12.2 million Kaiser Permanente members. The Federation works on behalf of the PMGs to optimize care delivery and spread Permanente Medicine – medicine that is patient centered, evidence based, technology enabled, culturally responsive, team delivered, and physician led. The Federation, based in Oakland, California, fosters an open learning environment and accelerates research, innovation, and performance improvements across the PMGs to expand the reach of Kaiser Permanente’s integrated care delivery model and to lead the nation in transforming care delivery.

Please visit permanente.org.

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The Permanente Federation

For more information or to schedule an interview with a Permanente physician expert, contact Laura Evenson at laura.evenson@kp.org.