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From: Sharry Langdale <langdale@rcn.com>
Sent: Monday, October 12, 2020 12:45 PM
To: WM Dem R&U Health Task Force
Subject: Support for House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard E. Neal's 9/17/20 RFI on the Misuse of Race Within Clinical Care

As an antiracist citizen who works as a unit coordinator and surgical liaison in the Surgical Center at Newton Wellesley Hospital, I am very aware of the misuse of race and ethnicity in clinical algorithms and research and see the need for the House Ways and Means Committee to address this as not merely necessary, but as mandatory. The information Congressman Neal has submitted to the committee makes it clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that the misuse is extensive and extensively documented. Thus this issue provides a unique opportunity to take steps toward eliminating the systemic racism that exists in our country in an area that COVID-19 has made abundantly clear affects millions of our citizens.

Re strategies for eliminating the misuse of race and ethnicity in clinical algorithms and research, the simplest and most obvious first step is to do what some hospitals have already begun to do; i.e., ban the use of algorithms that include race as a variable in medical diagnosis and treatment. More broadly, the voices of medical professionals and patients and the communities affected by these algorithms must be heard. This requires not only that people of color participate in discussions with the primarily white people who have the power and the authority to correct the misuse, but that they hold positions that grant them such power and authority. Many hospitals are now forming Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Offices and Committees. They are often led by white chairpersons and at best a token person of color. I certainly see and applaud the efforts of these offices to develop seminars and training in unconscious bias, racial awareness etc. But, in order to bring about meaningful change, the experience-based ideas and insights of black and brown people who are victims of the misuse must be incorporated in the planning and execution of these programs. Just as no single white person can represent the perspectives of all white people, no single person of color can represent the perspectives of all people of color. And of course there are many related tasks to accomplish the real elimination of systemic racism, including the question of who needs to do what to build the necessary trust between people of color and the medical system?

Respectfully submitted,

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