



Upcoming Events

Click here for an at-a-glance view of our upcoming events for the next 3 months

Taking Deliberate Steps to Combat Racism in the Classroom

James E.K. Hildreth Sr., President and CEO of Meharry Medical College recently said, "Today, we are fighting two formidable enemies—racism and disease. We cannot afford to let either win."

Yes. 是. Sí. نعم. and yea.

In an effort to combat racism while we battle disease and health inequities, faculty and staff in the VTC community are encouraged to learn meaningful ways to show solidarity and stand against racism and hate in all its forms. One way to do this is by ensuring that our classrooms, clinical environments and learning spaces are equity-mined and free from bias and hostility. As noted in the Virginia Tech Principles of Community, we must "reject all forms of prejudice and discrimination," as well as take individual and collective steps to increase "our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others."

Here are a few strategies and resources that can help instructors establish and maintain inclusive learning environments that are free of—or at least minimize—racial bias and hostility.

- Acknowledge that racism has deleterious effects on the health of minority populations and refresh curricula to address culturally competent health care, and health care inequities.
• Help learners develop the clinical skills to address and curtail racial bias in health care settings.
• In collaboration with students/residents, establish specific guidelines for appropriate behavior in the learning environment, including confidentiality, respectful disagreement, and civil debate.
• Don't ask learners to speak for an entire group. Overgeneralizing any group identity, or assigning any group of people to a singular characteristic, disposition, or behavior, is problematic.
• If by chance a tense exchange occurs in a learning session and you later realize or a learner shares something you did not recognize in the moment, consider revisiting the exchange and what you may all learn from it. Addressing the issue during the next session will actually model the behavior that you would like your learners to exhibit during challenging interactions.
• Address blatantly offensive and discriminatory behaviors and comments and hold learners accountable for their actions.
• Learn and use learners' preferred names. Ask for the correct pronunciation of someone's name. If someone has an accent and you can't understand what they are saying, ask them to repeat their comments slowly.

And remember, it is absolutely OK to seek knowledge, clarification and assistance from TEACH and other colleagues if you need support or feel that a topic is outside of your comfort zone.

Click here for Suggested Resources and Interesting Reading.

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Dean's Corner

At VTCSOM, preparing future leaders in medicine requires us to teach the fundamentals of how health care is delivered and how systems can work to optimize the health of patients and communities. Health Systems Science (HSS) comprises 12 different content domains that are relevant for physicians to understand. Each month this year the Dean's Corner will highlight one of the 12 domains of HSS.

Deaths from COVID-19 continue to rise and are projected to exceed 200,000 in the U.S. by October 1, 2020. Total COVID-19 deaths in the state exceed 1,500 and are slowly increasing by a declining number each day.

In May I focused on the health systems science Public Health competencies and the important role played by the Virginia Department of Health and its Medical Reserve Corps in preventing and containing spread of the pandemic. In light of the killings of unarmed Black Americans by law enforcement over the past several months, I will focus my comments on the competencies of Professionalism and Ethics. These competencies have been at the core of the medical profession since the days of Hippocrates.

In health systems science, we emphasize the importance of professional conduct, ethical behavior, honesty and responsibility. We recognize that fulfilling our professional responsibilities can take many forms, including advocacy. Advocacy is commonly used by physicians to help individual patients receive authorization from their health plans or insurers for needed medications, diagnostic tests, and treatments. However, as we have seen recently, advocacy can be directed toward correcting societal problems that negatively impact the health and well-being of large groups of patients and communities.

Advocacy efforts by physicians should not be politicized. Joining with community-based organizations to end food insecurity, improve the quality of school food programs, or display nutritional information in restaurants would rarely be considered evidence of a liberal or conservative agenda. Advocating to make a full range of birth control methods available at no cost aims to reduce the occurrence of teen pregnancy that disproportionately affects the health of low-income Americans of all races and ethnicities. Effective contraception is a public health priority with proven health benefits, and it should not be politicized.

Likewise, initiatives that address structural aspects of racism to improve health should be seen as an expression of professionalism rather than partisanship. Advocating to address victimless drug crimes using a medical model that supports rehabilitation would reduce the high prevalence of incarceration among Black Americans. Advocating for a single standard of professional behavior and equitable application of lethal force by law enforcement officers would save the lives of Black Americans and prevent a devastating impact on the mental health and financial security of their families and communities.

The Virginia Tech Principles of Community were first endorsed by the VT Board of Visitors in March 2005, and reaffirmed in September 2014. The principles of our land grant university emphasize human dignity, freedom of expression, civility, sensitivity, respect, affirmation of humanity, rejection of all forms of prejudice and discrimination, and a collective commitment to the VT motto of Ut Prosim (That I May Serve).

The Carilion Clinic Code of Excellence emphasizes the values of community (newly renamed collaboration), courage, commitment, compassion, and curiosity. These values drive the mission of improving the health of the communities Carilion serves and fulfillment of the vision of a common purpose of better patient care, better community health, and lower cost.

At the VTCSOM we are fortunate that the professional and ethical standards of the medical profession so closely match the standards of Virginia Tech and Carilion Clinic. Advocating for policy changes that improve community health fits well into the frameworks of both institutions that are so critically important to the success of our medical school. I am excited by the enriched opportunities we have to teach health systems science in this environment!

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"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences." -Audre Lorde



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Give us a call @ 540-855-6861

OCPD Website

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