

A Dose of Inspiration: ‘Black Men in White Coats’

David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

by

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<http://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/Black-men-in-white-coats-ucla-school-of-medicine>

U.S. medical schools have too few Black male medical students. That’s the cold, hard reality according to the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), which found that the number of Black men enrolled in U.S. medical schools declined from 1978 to 2014 — from 542 to just 515.

Now, the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and a handful of other medical schools are aiming to change that dismal reality with an unprecedented video outreach campaign.

With video profiles of young Black doctors, the campaign aims to inspire underrepresented minority students to consider becoming physicians. The UCLA videos will be prominently placed on the school’s website, disseminated via social media and shared by the medical school’s community engagement groups, as well as other outreach groups affiliated with the school.

The project is focused on Black men because the total of Black men enrolled in U.S. medical schools has actually fallen over the years, according to the 2015 AAMC report, *Altering the Course, Black Males in Medicine* (see the executive summary below). Further, among ethnic groups, the proportion of male-to-female medical school applicants is lowest for African-Americans.

The AAMC report not only included data about the dwindling numbers of Black male medical students, it cited likely reasons for the decline — among them, a lack of role models and negative portrayals of young Black men in the media.

The initiative began in 2013, with the Geffen School of Medicine as the fifth school to participate — and the first on the West Coast. Reaction to the campaign’s earlier videos on Facebook and from current Geffen School of Medicine students so far has been positive. And small wonder. The videos themselves are sophisticated, well-told stories about passionate men trying to make the world a better place.

The two participating UCLA physicians exemplify a commitment to medicine, to other young Black men and to their communities.

In one of the videos, Dr. Olawale Amubieya, who completed his internal medicine training at UCLA and is a fellow in the department of pulmonary and critical care medicine at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, speaks about the support network awaiting prospective medical school applicants.

In another video, Dr. Stanley Frencher, an assistant professor-in-residence at the Geffen School of Medicine and the director of surgical outcomes and quality for Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital, relates a common refrain he hears from patients.

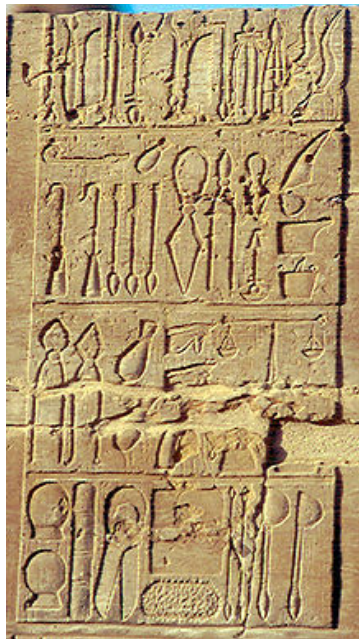
But the videos are not an isolated effort. The Geffen School of Medicine has a number of other initiatives in place aimed at increasing minority enrolment — including working with community groups to spread a message of inclusiveness and opportunity, and encouraging school groups that advocate for awareness and health access. The school also is committed to a Faculty Diversity Strategic Plan that it developed to ensure that it recruits and nurtures faculty from diverse backgrounds.

Impact is what the *Black Men in White Coat* videos are all about. By sharing the videos and their messages of inspiration, confidence and passion, the school's leaders and the campaign's organizers are confident they'll help shape a new narrative for young Black men in America. The videos are being released during Black History Month, which both honors the past and instills hope for the future.

Altering the Course, Black Males in Medicine Executive Summary

While many initiatives and programs supported by foundations, medical schools, and government have contributed to increasing diversity in the physician pipeline, the number of applicants from one major demographic group—Black males—has not increased above the number from 1978. That year, 1,410 Black males applied to medical school, and in 2014, just 1,337 applied. A similar trend is observed for firsttime matriculants: in 1978, there were 542 Black male matriculants to MD-granting institutions, and in 2014, there were 515. In addition, of all racial and ethnic groups, the proportion of applicants to medical school who were male compared with female is lowest for African-Americans—despite an overall increase in the number of Black male college graduates. The AAMC sought to understand the decline in Black males applying and matriculating to medical school by gathering the perspectives of 11 Black premedical students, physicians, researchers, and leaders. The interviews explored factors that may contribute to low application rates, experiences along the career pathway, and the role of academic medicine in altering the course of Black males in medicine.

The report captures the major themes from the interviews and highlights research and data from various sources to build the narrative to understand these trends and find broad-based solutions to alter the trends for Black men. Interviewees discussed: • Personal and external factors that contribute to success in becoming a physician • Factors in the early grades in the public education system that may adversely affect young Black boys • The role of community members in having either positive or negative influences on career exploration and decisions • Public perceptions and images of Black men, including negative media portrayals and lower expectations, that may adversely influence their educational and career progress • Four major areas in which academic medicine may influence current trends for Black males With the predicted shortage of between 46,000 and 90,000 physicians by the year 2025 and the changing demographics of the patient population, it's even more critical to provide greater access to care for a more diverse patient population. Increased physician diversity is often associated with greater access to care for patients with low incomes, racial and ethnic minorities, non-English-speaking patients, and individuals with Medicaid. The hope is that this report will prompt leaders in academic medicine to redouble their efforts to improve opportunities for minorities, with specific attention to African-American men. They could rethink and renew their existing initiatives, including reviewing and updating current admissions policies and practices, thinking creatively about formal and informal efforts to engage Black men and their communities, and conducting community outreach.



Ancient Egyptian medical instruments
in the Temple of Kom Ombo. At the time the relief was carved,
Egyptian medical science was almost certainly the most advanced in the world.



Dr. Olawale Amubieya, fellow in the department of pulmonary and critical care medicine at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center.



Dr. Stanley Frencher, an assistant professor-in-residence at the Geffen School of Medicine and the director of surgical outcomes and quality for Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital in Los Angeles, California.