



October 28, 2021

Road Map Bulletin: Racism Is a Public Health Crisis

Happy Thursday, Mount Sinai community –

As mentioned in last week's Bulletin, we want to discuss some recent news from New York City: **on Monday, October 18, the New York City Board of Health declared racism a public health crisis**, joining other organizations like the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [American Medical Association](#) that have declared racism serious threats to public health over the last year.



This resolution both aligns with Mount Sinai's Road Map for Action to Address Racism and has a direct connection to our Health System: our very own **Lynne D. Richardson, MD, Professor of Emergency Medicine, and Population Health Science and Policy, at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai**, is a member of the NYC Board of Health and had a direct hand in drafting and adopting this resolution. We caught up with Lynne to discuss the significance of the Board's declaration and what it all means.

First and foremost, this resolution acknowledges the systemic barriers to health care access that New Yorkers of color face (a topic we've touched on in [past Bulletins](#)). It also touches on the disproportionate impact on our communities from public health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, HIV, tuberculosis, maternal and infant mortality, mental health conditions, chronic diseases, and physical violence.

While the resolution is not legally binding, it does **lay out a series of actionable**

steps for the city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, including establishing a Data for Equity internal working group, undertaking an anti-racism review of the city health code in conjunction with community organizations, and partnering with other city agencies to assess structural racism that contributes to health determinants in areas such as transportation, housing, and education. You can read the full resolution [here](#).

Lynne told us that, “Just as Mount Sinai has committed to our Anti-Racism Road Map, many institutions and businesses are now candidly examining themselves to understand the ways structural racism is embedded within their own organizations and moving forward to intentionally dismantle discriminatory processes and structures.”

With this resolution, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene joins the ranks of groups doing this critical work, underscoring the importance of this moment as well as the need for ***all of us***—from government agencies to individuals—to commit to anti-racist action.

Lynne specifically highlighted the **intersectionality** present in the City's resolution and how critical it is for different organizations to work in tandem to address racism as a public health crisis. She noted that calling for city agencies to work together to address structural racism **“is a crucial step in taking an ‘all sectors’ approach to promoting, protecting, and improving the health of those who have been most affected by racism.”**

Lynne's role as a member of the Board of Health—and her connection to this resolution—make sense given her work at Mount Sinai, which is centered on health equity. In addition to teaching, Lynne is a founding Co-Director of the Institute for Health Equity Research at Icahn Mount Sinai, which was created to facilitate collaboration between scientists from every discipline with community, clinical, policy, and industry stakeholders to eliminate underlying causes of health disparities. The Institute equips researchers with the tools and knowledge they need to effectively delve into studies on topics such as the impact of COVID-19 on diverse populations.

We are grateful for change-makers in the Mount Sinai community like Lynne, who have been working tirelessly for years to change our Health System and region for the better. Now, with this historic declaration on the record for all to see, we look forward to following the real impact it will have on public policy and outcomes. In the meantime, we invite you to read more about the Institute of Health Equity Research [here](#), re-watch this Mount Sinai seminar [“The Impact of Racism on Mental Health,”](#) and attend upcoming events.

Join Us for an Upcoming Event

Chats for Change: Leadership and Race — On **Tuesday, November 2**, from **noon to 1pm**, join facilitator **Ann-Gel Palermo, DrPH, Senior Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** to explore the ways in which our current thinking about leadership often contributes to producing and maintaining racialized dynamics. Join the chat to explore what should be the core competencies associated with racial justice leadership. [Register on Zoom.](#)

A Conversation With Leaders: Yvette Calderon, MD, MS — On Wednesday, November 3, from 1 to 2 pm, join the Corporate Services Center Diversity Council and Yvette Calderon, MD, MS, Chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Mount Sinai Beth Israel, for a conversation about her career journey. [Register on Zoom.](#)

[Road Map for Action](#)

[Past Bulletins](#)
