

OREGON ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS
CONGRESS OF THE MEMBERS
74th ANNUAL MEETING
April 24, 2021
Resolution #1

Introduced by: Fernando Polanco M.Sc. M.D.

1 **Subject: Declaration from OAFP that “*Racism is a Public Health Crisis.*”**

2 *“Declare Racism a Public Health Emergency...It would be more than just a symbolic gesture.” –*
3 *Abudullah Shihpar, New York Times (9)*

4 **WHEREAS**, It is well established that Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC)
5 individuals and communities experience a vastly disproportionate burden of systemic
6 oppression and racism based on a society built “racial hierarchies, established through
7 colonisation, that pervade structures, histories, politics, and, ultimately, minds.” (1), and

8 **WHEREAS**, There is overwhelming and immense amount of evidence demonstrating racism
9 affecting BIPOC lives and communities in regardless to all aspects of their health. For example,
10 in the US, BIPOC have an undisputable disproportionate access to health care for reasons as
11 such and not limited to lack of health insurance therefore decreased abilities to seek
12 treatments for underlying chronic health conditions; and significantly decreased
13 socioeconomic status which limits access to various social determinants of health (i.e.,
14 adequate housing, food insecurity, access to education) (2). The immediacy for resolutions like
15 this to be passed can be exemplified with the recent mass shooting in Atlanta which left 6
16 Asian-American dead: it’s quite clear that racism kills and kills people on a daily basis. (10), and

17 **WHEREAS**, Simply being a BIPOC directly and detrimentally impacts lifespan. It is well
18 understood that ‘US Black and American Indian populations have long lived sicker and shorter
19 lives than the US White non-Hispanic population.’ (3) Furthermore, and taking our current
20 COVID pandemic as undeviating example of health disparity, mortality and COVID cases are
21 significantly higher in ‘people of color, high poverty, crowded housing, and high levels of
22 racialized economic segregation.’ (3) In a recent New York Times article calling for the
23 declaration for racism a public health emergency, the acknowledgement that racism is a public
24 health crisis could also inform the public and create policy to reinforce the fact that increased
25 COVID infection burden, death, and lack of vaccination is based on structural racism not race
26 itself” (9), and

27 **WHEREAS**, A precedent has been set by various local, states and national level organizations,
28 institutes, and governing bodies that have adopted such a declaration. Declarations have

29 historically been explicitly written statements clearly published within internal and external
30 interfaces (i.e., websites, internal documents, statement of policy) that plainly delineate the
31 actions that particular entity is committed to in order to combat racism. For example, the
32 American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), have a very easily accessible web
33 link to their 8 actionable items in which the ACOG is committed to addressing in order to end
34 racial bias which was ratified by their executive board (8). Medical institutions such as the
35 American Public Health Association and American Medical Association and 20 US cities and
36 counties have already made their stances clear on this point. (3)(4) A resolution to declare
37 racism as a public health crisis was recently submitted to the 116th congress 2nd session that
38 Oregon’s U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley both supported. (6), and

39 **WHEREAS**, The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) has made a statement asking
40 the White House to acknowledge that “It is time for the United States to officially recognize
41 racism as a public health issue and declare a public health emergency to address the negative
42 impacts racism is having on the physical and mental well-being of millions of people.”(7) A
43 subsequent letter was made and sent to federal law makers to urge legislative action. The
44 OAFP made their support known in a statement May 2020 supporting AAFP’s statement.
45 Consequently, the AAFP has made a policy statement clearly stating that “recognizes that
46 racism is a system that categorizes people based on race, color, ethnicity and culture to
47 differentially allocate societal goods and resources in a way that unfairly disadvantages some,
48 while without merit, rewards others.” (10) Additionally, the AAFP encouraged all health care
49 entities to “adopt anti-racist policies.” (10). However, the OAFP has not made any clear,
50 explicitly written, and/or outlined declaration or policy that racism is institutionally affirmed in
51 health care and that racism itself is a public health crisis that requires action., and

52 **WHEREAS**, as Family Medicine Physicians and as health care stewards, it is our duty and
53 responsibility to acknowledge that racism literally kills the very same people we were sworn to
54 care for. It is also the responsibility of the OAFP to advocate against injustice that we see every
55 day in our clinic, hospitals and communities., NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE

56 **RESOLVED**, that the OAFP commits the organization to:

- 57 1. Adopt and publish a statement that *Racism is a Public Health Crisis.*
- 58 2. Advance racial equity and justice in all aspects of its conduct, procedures and in its efforts
59 to shape health policy and health care.
- 60 3. Recognize that racism in all forms contributes to lack of health equity, access to health
61 care, and is a barrier to all aspects of medical care (4).
- 62 4. Call on OAFP and AAFP members to integrate issues of racial injustice, including recognition
63 of provider bias, into the teaching of students, residents, and practitioners, and all levels of
64 clinical care (8).
- 65 5. Allocate time and budget in the coming program year for the Board and applicable
66 Commissions to identify what future actions may be appropriate in furtherance of the goal

67 of dismantling institutional racism and implementing anti-racist policies within the OAFP
68 and its membership, and BE IT FURTHER

69 **RESOLVED**, That the AAFP commits the organization to.

- 70 1. Advance racial equity and justice in all aspects of its conduct, procedures and in its efforts
71 to shape health policy and health care.
- 72 2. Call on AAFP members to integrate issues of racial injustice, including recognition of
73 provider bias, into the teaching of students, residents, and practitioners, and all levels of
74 clinical care (8).
- 75 3. Allocate time and budget in the coming program year for the Board and applicable
76 Commissions to identify what future actions may be appropriate in furtherance of the goal
77 of dismantling institutional racism and implementing anti-racist policies within the AAFP
78 and its membership.

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Citations:

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