

June 3, 2020

Today I am sharing a painful message. I'm overwhelmed, truly overwhelmed by the recent events surrounding the tragic death of George Floyd... and I am pained by the violence. Racism is a public health threat and a driver of health inequity. COVID-19 is a public health threat. The events over the past week, the events over the past several months, have glaringly highlighted the persistent health inequities impacting on our communities of color, as well as the health inequities impacting individuals living in other vulnerable communities.

As an organization whose mission is to advance the knowledge and practice of allergy, asthma and immunology for optimal patient care, the Academy stands against racism and hate. We recognize that experiences of racism and discrimination increase the risk for health problems, including asthma and COVID-19. The Academy is an organization of healthcare professionals, individuals who are committed to advancing health for all. The Academy is an organization of educators, including members who are directly involved in the training of medical students, residents and fellows. Training that must include and address factors that affect health disparities and healthcare access.

I am heartbroken today, but I am also hopeful that we can move forward. We need to learn and listen from individuals who have faced discrimination. The Academy has made a commitment to act.

Exploring opportunities for engagement with student medical associations serving minority groups is part of our new strategic plan, and I'm excited about seeing how this engagement will impact on the future of allergy and immunology. Earlier this week the Academy joined the Council of Medical Specialty Societies, representing 800,000 physicians and 45 specialties, in a statement on racism in health care. Our Committee on the Underserved is working on a work group report on Health Disparities in Allergic and Immunologic Conditions in the Underserved. We are working with Hart Health Strategies and our Advocacy Committee to send letters to the Majority Leader and Minority Leader of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. We will continue to partner with national organizations to take action against inequities in patient care, education and research.

So I am optimistic that by standing together we can effect meaningful change. Thank you for listening.