



## DIVERSE HEALTHCARE TEAMS LEAD TO A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

By Claude Jarrett MD, FAAOS

Despite our nation's dramatic history, providing high-quality healthcare equally to our culturally diverse community remains difficult. Stereotypes and biases remain rampant in our healthcare system despite good intentions. Unfortunately, research has shown that many versions of "diversity training" for health care professionals have a low success rate. The overwhelming majority of medical providers in our community do not need to be instructed that people who look different have similar fundamental needs. We all have children in need of attentive medical care, have spouses whose occupations require timely medical intervention, or have grandparents with a fragile physiological state. Our healthcare community does not "need to be taught" this but rather, as attributed to C.S. Lewis, "needs only to be reminded."

Several influential studies on this topic report that the most successful and enduring "reminders" must include a diverse workforce. Every level of our healthcare system that provides care to our community must consist of excellent employees and providers of varying experiences, race, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds. If all our physicians were the same, we wouldn't be bringing anything to the party but additional bodies. Frequent meaningful encounters with colleagues and patients of diverse backgrounds, on a regular basis, go a long way to dispel misconceptions and erroneous beliefs. On top of providing medical care, these professionals must also, to some degree, live, eat, and breathe in the community. These regular encounters provide conscious and unconscious reminders of the overwhelmingly identical DNA we share.

The benefits of a diverse group of medical providers go both ways. Not only are the patients in our community rewarded by a more understanding and awakened healthcare workforce but the medical providers as well. Patients benefit from having physicians and members of their medical care team of various cultural backgrounds and experiences. Research shows that this can provide an innovative array of treatment options that patients may otherwise fail to

benefit from. Studies find that increasing the diversity of experiences, backgrounds, skills, and ideas can boost community living standards by approximately 30%. Physicians benefit from having colleagues from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, which allow us to improve the care we provide. Additionally, many physicians acknowledge that, at times, we learn more from our patients than our patients learn from us. Thus, treating and listening to patients from various backgrounds nourish the growth of our own collective expertise.

Our community should continue to cultivate racially and culturally different physicians and medical professionals. New Hanover and Pender counties should be pleased but not content with its increasing group of high quality, selfless, and diverse group of medical professionals. We must continue to demand this from our leaders, healthcare institutions, and medical community because you deserve it.

*Claudius D. B. Jarrett, MD, FAAOS is an undergraduate of Xavier University and an MD graduate of Northwestern University School of Medicine in Chicago. His Orthopaedic Surgery residency was at Emory University Hospital in Georgia. A Hand and Upper Extremity Fellowship was completed at Allegheny Hospital in Pennsylvania. Dr. Jarrett practices Orthopaedic Surgery at Wilmington Health.*

