



ADVOCACY AGENDA: WORKING FOR YOU

The Association of Black Cardiologists (ABC) is working at local, state, and federal levels to eliminate disparities in cardiovascular disease and stroke in Blacks and other minorities with guidance from the ABC Advocacy Committee.

The ABC endeavors to be a leading authority for policymakers on issues that impact the practice of and access to cardiovascular care in all populations, including by advocating for initiatives and programs focused on education, prevention, and treatment.

ABC is focused on building strong, effective relationships with varied stakeholders throughout the healthcare community to help advance its advocacy agenda. Collaboration is a pillar of success.

The ABC has identified the following areas as top legislative and regulatory priorities:

- **Removing Barriers to Existing and Emerging Technologies to treat cardiovascular disease and stroke**

All patients with cardiovascular disease must have equal access to emerging and existing technologies. Current public and private payer policies create barriers to patient access and contribute to disparities in care, particularly among minority populations.

ABC's goal is to ensure that payment policies for life-saving technologies do not unfairly discriminate against minority populations.

- **Improving Patient Access and Adherence to Cardiovascular Medical Therapies**

Despite advances in medical therapies for treating cardiovascular disease, disparities in access to these therapies exist in minority populations. Insurance practices, such as preauthorization, restrictive formularies, drug substitution, and drug costs, create barriers for physicians to deliver evidence-based medicine.

ABC believes that one of the best ways to close the healthcare disparities gap in cardiovascular disease is to focus on quality improvement for the populations that need it, which can be accomplished, in part, through quality measurement.

- **Increasing Enrollment of Minority Populations in Clinical Trials**

ABC believes the provision of safe and effective healthcare depends on diversity in clinical trials and the differences discovered in these trials based on race, gender, ethnicity, will help the healthcare delivery system move toward the provision of more individualized, higher quality healthcare for all.

Discouragingly low numbers of minorities included in clinical trials persist. Unfortunately, while Black Americans comprise 13.2 percent of the population just 5 percent are clinical trial participants.

ABC supports federal legislative efforts, such as those found in the Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2016, that would focus federal resources, policies, and infrastructure to eliminate health disparities in all populations. The effort to improve diversity in clinical trials will require specific public engagement and community building efforts, such as that supported by the Office of Minority Health and the Clinical Trial Engagement Network.

ABC is encouraged by recent legislative efforts to improve diversity in clinical trials included in the 21st Century Cures Act of 2016. ABC will continue to engage with the National Institutes of Health in its effort to assemble and make public accurate data on health disparities in clinical trials and to develop a strategic plan to increase representation of underrepresented minority populations in clinical trials.

- **Fostering a Diverse Healthcare Workforce**

ABC agrees with the research that suggests that minority patients are more likely to adhere to healthcare recommendations that are provided by individuals of the same race. Unfortunately, while minorities represent almost a third of the overall U.S. population, less than 6 percent of minorities make up our national physician and dental corps.

ABC supports federal legislative efforts, such as those found in the Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2016, aimed at improving the diversity of the health workforce, including grants through the Public Health Service Act, loan repayment programs through the National Health Service Corps and the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention, and federally and privately funded scholarships and fellowship programs.

- **Ensuring the Availability of Affordable and Comprehensive Healthcare Coverage**

One identifiable outcome predictor for heart disease is health insurance coverage. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2015 roughly 12.8 percent of adults aged 18–64 were uninsured; 18.9 percent had public coverage, and 69.7 percent had private health insurance coverage. The most notable gains in health coverage occurred between 2010-2015, during which time the uninsured rate fell from 22.3 percent to 12.8 percent. Between 2013-2015, there was a significant decrease in uninsured black adults, from about 25 percent to 14 percent.

ABC advocates for health insurance coverage for all American and is committed to working alongside policymakers to improve not only health insurance coverage, but access so that patients receive timely, high quality care, preventive services, medications and other necessary treatments. Imperatively, health equity for minority, underserved and special needs populations must be improved.