Message from NPWH Leadership in Celebration of Black History Month 2022

Black history is a significant and continuous part of American history. The month of February each year is dedicated to honoring, celebrating and highlighting the achievements of Black Americans. However, it is important to recognize and celebrate beyond just this month. This year’s theme, Black Health and Wellness, provides us with an opportunity to honor the legacy, achievements and knowledge of Black traditional healers, healthcare providers, scientific researchers, and medical and nursing scholars.

The history of mistreatment and abuse of Black people by the medical establishment is a part of this conversation that we cannot shy away from. Acts such forced sterilization, violent abuse of enslaved women in gynecological experiments, and the Tuskegee syphilis study are some of the more well-known atrocities. These events have played a significant role in medical mistrust -- including the mistrust of providers and medical and scientific establishments. This history has carried forward to present day most notably in women’s healthcare and is reflected every day in the American maternal mortality crisis. In the U.S. today, Black women are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy related cause than White Women and 60% of pregnancy-related maternal deaths are preventable.

Maternal morbidity and mortality are not the only issues impacting the health of Black women and birthing people. They are at higher incidences of heart disease, stroke, cancers, diabetes, maternal morbidities, obesity, and stress. The SARS-COV2 Pandemic has disproportionately impacted the Black community, with Black people 2.5 times more likely to be hospitalized and 1.7 times more likely to die from SARS-COV2. Underlying racial and ethnic health disparities exacerbated by systematic racism and a history of mistrust plagues the American healthcare system. Inequities have prevented, and continue to prevent, Black Americans from fair and equitable care.

Thankfully, there are national and other level efforts occurring to address this broken system and support the health and wellness of Black people. NPWH is committed to progressing this work, too. We are focused on creating equity – within our organization, the WHNP profession, the women’s and gender-related healthcare field, and beyond.

In 2021, as part of our strategic planning process, NPWH developed a statement confirming our commitment to inclusion, diversity and equity within our organization. We list it alongside our Mission and Vision statements, because we know if must be part of the lens through which we do all our work. We are committed to increasing inclusivity, diversity, and equity in our organization, the WHNP profession, the women’s and gender-related healthcare field, and beyond.

---

1 https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/features/maternal-mortality/index.html

Our Membership is composed of professionals representing diversity by, but not limited to, specialty area, educational background, race and ethnicity, age, geographic location, socioeconomic status, ability, gender and identity, sexual orientation, and personal beliefs. We actively seek to engage and amplify the voices that have historically been silenced, and ensure they are represented in our staff, leadership, and programming.

Our profession recognizes the need to grow in diversity and dismantle racism, discrimination, and other barriers to education and career paths for professionals from underrepresented and marginalized groups. We are working together with others to expand opportunities and promote diversity within the WHNP professional community.

Our field understands the health disparities and injustice created by implicit bias, social determinants, and systemic racism. Through self and organizational assessment, education, professional development, and advocacy, we are working to counter these forces and work for equity in all aspects of women’s and gender related healthcare.

Together, we can positively impact the health and wellness of Black communities of people from the women’s health and gender related population.

In Celebration of Black History Month, We Ask You to Consider the Following Action Items:
• Use your professional platform to engage in clinical practice, education, research, advocacy that threads equity in every aspect of care provided to patients, families and communities
• Develop and implement a strategic plan to dismantle systems in place that negatively impact the health and wellness of diverse population of people
• Commitment to ongoing self-assessments of your implicit bias and utilizing tools to assist with mitigating these biases in the future
• Invest in your professional development by attending educational activities and courses focused on proper care of diverse populations of people
• Collaborate with Black led health care organizations to create supportive alliances for change
• Remind people that racial injustice still exists, and health care disparities are real
• Share social media posts created by Black people to support health care justice
• Seek out and support Black owned businesses
• Purchase books written by Black authors

Thank you for your support and the work you are doing in communities all over the world to advance health equity.

With kind regards,

Shawana Moore, DNP, MSN, CRNP, WHNP-BC
Chair, Board of Directors, National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women’s Health (NPWH)

Heather L. Maurer, MA, CAE
Chief Executive Officer, National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women’s Health (NPWH)