



Table of Contents

- Welcome
- CMO Strategic Plan Update
- CMO Spotlight: Use Every Opportunity Implementation Tool
- Program Spotlight: Bureau of Bronx Neighborhood Health
- Upcoming Events and New Staff

Welcome

*Welcome to the fourth issue of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (NYC Health Department) Chief Medical Officer (CMO) quarterly newsletter, **The Bridge**!*

This newsletter is to help keep healthcare delivery partners updated, informed and connected with the work of the NYC Health Department. We would love to hear from you — please share your thoughts and feedback on what else you would like to see in this newsletter, or inquire about how to connect with the Health Department by emailing us at chiefmedicalofficer@health.nyc.gov. Thank you for your partnership and commitment to a more just and equitable New York City!

CMO Strategic Plan Updates

Read below to learn more about each domain of the CMO Strategic Plan.

Domain I: Bridging Public Health and Health Care

The Office of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) is dedicated to advancing our mission to bridge public health and health care while centering health equity and antiracism. This fall the CMO office released the inaugural [Coalition to End Racism in Clinical Algorithms \(CERCA\)](#) Report. Since publishing an open letter to the American Thoracic Society (ATS), calling for the elimination of race adjustment in Pulmonary Function Tests—the CMO office has hosted two meetings with ATS leadership to discuss the urgency of this issue and the steps needed to advance race-conscious, anti-racist medicine.

We continue to build the bridge between public health and health care through our work with:

1. The Coalition to End Racism in Clinical Algorithms.
2. An audit of our provider engagement strategies across the agency.
3. Collaboration with the National Kidney Foundation around the disparities in kidney care specifically for the black community as a result of race adjusted eGFR. We are excited about our campaign in the new year focused on patient engagement and provider education so stay tuned!

Domain 2: Advancing the Health Department's Commitment to Anti-Racism in Public Health Practice and Policy

This October the CMO Office was awarded a grant from the Macy Foundation to host a convening of New York City's medical education leadership, students, and staff in June 2023. The purpose of this event is to discuss ways in which we can advance CERCA through convening medical school leadership and student-led groups and directly addressing issues of systematic racism embedded in medical education.

The convening will be a day-long event that includes a series of lectures, presentations, and workshops centering on how the removal of race from clinical algorithms, in addition to addressing the erroneous concepts of racial essentialism. The series of discussions and panels will present the best strategies to address and amend medical education curricula to become more anti-racist. The goal of the convening is to provide a safe space for hospitalists, medical school leadership, and students to engage in conversations and spur change through direct action and education. We are excited to plan, partner, and build out our programming this Spring!

Domain 3: Building Institutional Accountability

One of the marvels of modern-day medicine is its speed. Data analytics—test results, spread patterns, and health trends are available faster than ever before. Our ability to convene with city hall, align on best practices, and notify the public has revolutionized over the last two decades. We have a health system with solutions specialists and the infrastructure to get things done. The evolution of our health department into an institution that strives to bridge public health and healthcare has overseen the direct impact on the health and wellness of New York City's residents. However, with every great feat, there is also an opportunity for growth, reflection, improvement, and transparency.

The MPV Outbreak presents a critical opportunity for us as healthcare practitioners to change, grow and transform our delivery of healthcare—explicitly in the delivery of care to historically marginalized LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers. The change must first start with language and understanding. Present DOHMH language is limited in its understanding of the cultural and social context of the lived experiences of the LGBTQIA+ community. In addition, the nuance and intersectionality of individuals who also identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Middle Eastern, and/or multiracial must be understood and included. How we speak to, publicly identify, and interact with our patients in clinics and in public health campaigns must be addressed.

Outdated terms, colorblindness, stigmatization, and resistance to understanding an individual's unique experiences have rippling negative consequences. Health data for many decades intentionally excluded or failed to survey folx in the LGBTQIA+ community, which means as public health practitioners there are gaps in our training and knowledge. We must practice due diligence and ensure our assessments are thorough and include information about an individual's unique context. How we treat and promote health maintenance directly impacts the practiced health behaviors of the communities we serve. We have to apply a psycho-behavioral lens to understand patient needs, institutional shortcomings, and our jobs as the provider— or rather convener of the two. Our growth comes from our humility in understanding that tailored, dedicated, and consistent engagement can prove to repair harm and build community confidence.

his work requires an intentional and deliberate change in our approach. Identifying this oversight will allow us to close the gaps and strengthen relationships. There is so much being asked of physicians—yet it is us who have the responsibility and honor to serve. We are accountable to our community, we are the voices of the unheard, we are the healers of the sick and we are the scientists making a change.

CMO Spotlight: Use Every Opportunity Implementation Tool

[The Use Every Opportunity Implementation Tool](#) is an adaptable framework for health care workflows to achieve the highest level of COVID-19 vaccine coverage. This framework is especially important for increasing vaccination of patients at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness and members of communities that have been historically marginalized, including Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) people who have translation and interpretation needs, people with disabilities, and people who live in priority neighborhoods. Moreover, it can provide various strategies and quality improvement opportunities for Maintenance of Certification requirements in certain primary care specialties for ensuring COVID-19 vaccination is offered at every eligible patient encounter.

Program Spotlight: Bureau of Bronx Neighborhood Health

Please join me in congratulating our Assistant Commissioner for the Bureau of Bronx Neighborhood Health, Anita Reyes, for being selected for the 2023 Sloan Public Service Award! Fund for the City of New York recognizes city employees who work tirelessly to improve both the functioning of New York City government as well as residents' quality of life. The prestigious Sloan Public Service Awards are bestowed annually upon six extraordinary civil servants whose unparalleled dedication and impressive accomplishments benefit us all. To all who have met Anita or been touched by her work, there is no doubt that she embodies kindness, hard work, dedication, and commitment to public service. I could not be more proud and grateful to have Anita on our team. Please join me in congratulating Anita on this recognition.

Upcoming Events

- Join a free, live & interactive panel on building institutional accountability for with AAMC's Dr. Malika Fair, AMA's Dr. Aletha Maybank, Just Equity for Health's Dr. Stella Safo, and NYCDOHMH CMO Dr. Michelle Morse. **Tune in Tuesday, January 10th at 10:30AM EST.** Learn more: https://www2.pardot.health.nyc.gov/e/944933/RPHInstitutionalAccountability/mjt76/229118219?h=TrB3NLvgBp_V51cXWfhClcCNG7Xx7D2SmzfujFD65bY
- **Eighth Coalition to End Racism in Clinical Algorithms (CERCA) Meeting** On Friday, January 27th at 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM, CERCA will hold its eighth meeting. If you are interested in learning more about CERCA or joining the coalition, please email Adriana Joseph at ajoseph4@health.nyc.gov.

Staff Updates and Announcements

This Fall the CMO Office expanded its team adding three new members to our CHECW community:

Haniya Abbasi, MPH is the new Provider Engagement Coordinator in the Center for Health Equity Community Wellness (CHECW) CMO Office. Prior to joining the CMO team full-time, Haniya was a CHECW intern who assisted and supported the division on various projects and initiatives being built out of the CMO Office. Haniya completed her Master's in Public Health in May 2022 with a certificate in Health Policy & Practice from the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University. We are excited to have her aboard as her insight and dedication have been invaluable to the team. Welcome Haniya!

Dr. Mona Quarless, MEd., M.S., Ph.D. is the new Provider Engagement Manager in the CMO office at CHECW. Dr. Quarless graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a doctorate in Health Psychology. She also earned her M.Ed in Child Studies from the Peabody School of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University. Dr. Quarless has worked as a researcher and community health worker for the past 13 years. She has served various communities in South Africa (Port Elizabeth, Soweto, Khayelitsha), Jamaica, Grenada, and various cities in the South, Mid-Atlantic, and New England regions of the United States. Her work has centered on community empowerment, public health partnerships, and power harnessed in transformative provider-patient relationships. We are excited to have her on the team. Welcome Dr. Quarless!

Dr. Toni Eyssallenne, MD, PhD is the new Senior Medical Advisor in the Chief Medical Officer Office at the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). Dr. Eyssallenne graduated from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry's Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP). She served as faculty for both Internal Medicine and Pediatrics departments at University of Miami and also started and directed their Global Health Tracks. She created a pediatric residency program in Haiti, focused on evidence-based and critical care medicine and continues to produce qualified pediatricians to add to the workforce. She served as the Program Director of the Internal Medicine-Pediatrics Residency Program at the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, Florida and Capstone advisor for MD/MPH and MPH students at the University of Miami School of Public Health Sciences. Prior to serving at DOHMH, Dr. Eyssallenne was NY Market Medical Director for the health technology company, CityBlock Health where she focused on delivering complex, integrated care to historically marginalized communities. She is a transformative leader and we are excited to have her on the team. Welcome Dr. Eyssallenne!

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