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COMMON GROUND HEALTH LEADS EFFORTS TO UNDERSTAND RACE-BASED MEDICAL TESTING

Awareness campaign exposes and expunges a harmful decades-long practice

Rochester, New York, March 1, 2022—Black people living with kidney disease need to know about a new approach to calculating the kidney’s function— one that no longer takes race into account when assessing kidney function.

“This is about being anti-racist when it comes to medical care,” said Common Ground Health chief medical officer Dr. Linda Clark. “We are looking at many tests and algorithms to ensure that race is not a component of decision-making in medicine.”

In fall 2021 Monroe County Medical Society’s Committees on Equity and Diversity and its Quality Collaborative joined forces with Common Ground Health, University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC), the Black Physicians Network, GRRHIO, the Practice Associations (GRIPA, AHP and FLIPA) and Excellus BlueCross BlueShield to start promoting that message. They are planning forums, webinars, and presentations for the community starting this spring, and clinical education is already underway.

The successful collaboration became stronger upon the release of a joint statement, by the National Kidney Foundation and the American Society of Nephrology, outlining recommendations for excluding race in diagnosing kidney disease.

For decades, the way the kidney’s function is measured (the eGFR, estimated glomerular filtration rate) has been different for Black people and White people. There was no separate result reported at all for those not considered White or Black. Patients now will see a small change in their lab results, no matter which local health system they use.

“Testing and treating people for medical conditions based on their race can lead to misdiagnosis and cause devastating consequences,” said Robert Mayo, MD, chief medical officer of Rochester Regional Health. “As medical professionals, we should be striving to be more inclusive with care. The health of a community is incumbent

upon giving every person equal access to high-quality care regardless of race or ethnicity.”

This is an important issue on many levels—one of which is the fact that Black people are nearly four times more likely than White people to experience kidney failure.

“The fact that Black persons are almost four times more likely to suffer kidney failure than White persons exemplifies why this imperative is so critically important,” said Dr. Michael Apostolakos, chief medical officer and vice president of the University of Rochester Medical Center. “Ending race-based medical testing is a major step forward in addressing this and other health care inequities.”

Common Ground Health’s African American and Latino Health Coalitions will dive deeper into this and similar topics at the annual [Speak Life! Health Equity Conference](#). Scheduled for Saturday, April 23 from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., the no-cost virtual conference will feature nationally acclaimed writer and medical ethicist Harriet Washington as its keynote speaker.

For more information on changes to eGFR calculation and what that means for people living with kidney disease, please visit the [National Kidney Foundation](#) website.

About Common Ground Health

Founded in 1974, Common Ground is a nationally recognized nonprofit health research and planning organization for the nine-county Rochester-Finger Lakes region. We bring together leaders from health care, education, business, government and other sectors to find common ground on health challenges. Learn more at www.commongroundhealth.org.