

AMERSA Issues Solidarity Statement 06.11.20

AMERSA joins in solidarity with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to dismantle the structural, systemic, and individual racism that pervades the United States.

AMERSA's mission is to improve health and well-being through interdisciplinary leadership in substance use education, research, clinical care, and policy. Given the devastating and deadly impacts of racism, discrimination, and violence on mental health and substance use, we reaffirm our commitment to expose and eliminate inequities in access to high-quality healthcare, mental health, and, especially, substance use services.

Drug use, addiction, incarceration, and overdose are inextricably linked to a “war on drugs” underpinned by anti-Black racism. People of color are more likely to be incarcerated for drug-related offenses despite approximately equal rates of drug use across races – leading to a cascade of negative consequences including, but not limited to, increased risk of overdose, fewer employment options, and multi-generational poverty and economic disadvantage...these compound one another. Furthermore, lack of culturally-responsive prevention and treatment approaches in our substance use care settings contribute to poorer engagement and retention of under-represented minorities compared to White patients, which places them at additional increased risk for negative outcomes. The status quo is unacceptable. Though we regret that it has taken more senseless murders of Black people to ignite us, the AMERSA Board of Directors now firmly commits to doubling down on our efforts to discover, teach, practice, and invigorate the national discussion about unhealthy substance use and the social determinants of health and well-being—factors that include race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, citizenship status, socioeconomic status, education, neighborhood, physical environment, employment, social support networks, and access to health care.

We pledge to more actively promote cultural, linguistic, and racial equity and inclusion as we advance evidence-based and interprofessional substance use scholarship, policies, and clinical practice. Specifically, the AMERSA BoD commits to ensuring racial diversity in its conference speakers and attendees, growing and mentoring the diversity of our membership through targeted outreach, recruitment, and scholarships, and devoting a special SAj issue on racial and ethical issues associated with addiction care. We invite you to join us with your ideas and action by emailing info@amersa.org. To realize the promise of liberty, opportunity and equality, equity and inclusion must be at the forefront of our work. In the names of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Tony McDade, and countless others, we commit to transformative change in the communities where we live and work affirming that Black Lives Matter.

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President
On behalf of AMERSA and the Board of Directors