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Keep Politics Out of the Doctor's Office

Woke ideology and policies have become quite literally a hazard to your health.

By Stanley Goldfarb

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Healthcare is being infected by the radical ideology that has corrupted education and public safety. But while critical race theory and crime waves have been in the news, the public is largely unaware of medicine's turn toward division and discrimination. Americans deserve to know that their health and well-being are at risk.

At the heart of this is the claim that healthcare is systemically racist—that most physicians are biased and deliver worse care to minorities. Health disparities do exist among racial groups, but physician bias isn't the cause. The psychological test at the root of this narrative, the 1998 Implicit Association Test, has been widely discredited, and I know from long experience as a medical educator and practitioner that physicians address the needs of each patient, regardless of skin color. Moreover, attacking physicians is dangerous. It degrades minority trust in healthcare while undermining health outcomes for everyone.

Consider what's happening in medical research. The National Library of Medicine database shows more than 2,700 recent papers on "racism and medicine," which generally purport to show physician bias leading to racial disparities in health outcomes. Yet the most commonly cited studies are shoddily designed, ignore such critical factors as pre-existing conditions, or reach predetermined and sensationalized conclusions that aren't supported by reported results. These papers in turn are used to source even more shoddy research. This is a corruption of medical science in service to political ideology.

Prominent medical journals are complicit in the crusade against medical professionals. The New England Journal of Medicine touts its "commitment to understanding and combating racism as a public health and human rights crisis," while Health Affairs is implementing a strategy to "dismantle racism and increase racial equity" in healthcare. They publish piece after piece calling, explicitly or implicitly, for a fundamental change in the medical profession. They're also bringing race and other nonacademic factors into the peer-review process, threatening the scientific analysis on which physician practice and patient health depend.

Medical schools increasingly are preparing physicians for social activism at the expense of medical science. Such student groups as White Coats for Black Lives demand that administrators reframe curriculum around reparations for slavery, decarceration of prisoners, and other topics with no bearing on training doctors to care for individual patients. Medical schools and residencies are lowering admissions standards. The result will be fewer talented physicians providing high-quality care to fewer patients.

Physicians are being pushed to discriminate. Hospitals, state health authorities and the federal government have all authorized race-based formulas for rationing Covid treatments. Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston (Harvard's teaching hospital) is moving toward "preferential care based on race" across the board. And the Biden administration is offering higher Medicare reimbursement rates to hospitals and physicians who "create and implement an anti-racism plan." To fight their supposed bias, physicians are being bribed into discriminating by race.

These policies and practices have no justification. There's no credible evidence that physicians are racist or that minority patients will benefit if healthcare is built on a race-based foundation. Common sense says that patients of all colors will suffer. The public's trust in medical institutions, which has already fallen during the pandemic, will fall further and take patient health with it.

Having talked with many physicians, I know that unwarranted accusations of racism are contributing to physician burnout and early retirement, making it harder for patients to receive care, especially in vulnerable communities. Such accusations also sow profound distrust in the treatment room, eroding the doctor-patient relationship that's crucial to better health outcomes. As race-based ideology dominates ever more of medical research and education, nonscientific factors will increasingly determine what treatments patients receive.

Healthcare is close to a tipping point, but I'm confident a majority of physicians oppose what's happening to our profession. Many fear speaking out, lest the social-justice mob destroy their careers, but the woke takeover of healthcare will do that anyway. That's why I'm launching Do No Harm, a nonprofit that will help medical professionals and concerned Americans protect and promote the principles at the heart of healthcare: fairness, equal access, and the best, most personalized treatment for every patient.

Current and future physicians must tell the country that healthcare is being profoundly damaged by a radical and divisive ideology. The health and well-being of every American depend on it.

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