

# Diversity in Medical Research



Penn Medicine  
Center for Health Equity Advancement

## What is it?

Wednesday, April 6th, 2022

Diversity in medical research is about making sure that the science we create is by diverse scientists in partnership with diverse populations. But we have not reached this ideal due to a history of unethical medical experimentation and treatment. From the 1700s to as late as the 2000s, White physicians conducted unethical studies on enslaved Black populations and their descendants. They thought that if Black populations had poorer health outcomes than White populations, the differences must be due to something inherent to "Blackness" and not structural racism. This past has led to many untruths about race in medicine and distrust of participating in medical research that still impact us today.

## Why is it important?

Medical research seeks answers to questions such as how and when to treat disease or what medical technologies or treatments to apply. Unless such questions are studied across diverse populations, we will not fully understand if the answers we discover can apply to everyone. Also, it is not enough to diversify the populations we study. We must also diversify who asks the medical questions. Researchers, like all of us, have implicit bias that impacts what questions they ask, how they collect the data, and how they interpret the answers they find. One example of this was the race correction factor for measuring kidney function. This factor raised the bar for concern for Black patients only, delaying care such as referrals for a kidney transplant. We no longer have this at Penn.

## What you can do

- Understand how to use Race in Medicine and research
- Engage the communities you serve in the research or any work you do.
- Seek out research and sources by diverse authors with diverse study populations
- Recognize your own biases.

## Learn more

- Penn and Slavery Project
- The 1619 Project
- Best Practices for a Convening a Community Advisory Board
- Addressing Challenges in Recruiting Diverse Populations for Research: Practical Experience
- Hear a story from Penn Medicine faculty, staff or students related to this topic (begin listening at 26:27).

**[Click here to learn more and see the full schedule of HEW events!](#)**