

# Kaiser Permanente Prioritizes Latino and Black Health

Kaiser Permanente's culturally sensitive health initiatives build trust within Black and Latino communities to help close health gaps.

September 6, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

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The Permanente Health Plan was established in 1945 to provide health care to workers building the Colorado aqueduct in Southern California regardless of race, class or ethnicity. Now known as Kaiser Permanente, the medical group continues to hew to its original principles, as evidenced by several major initiatives promoting [equitable care](#), including "Salud en Español," an inclusive care model for Spanish-speaking patients at Northwest Permanente, as well as the Center for Black Health and Wellness.

Launched in 2020, Northwest Permanente (part of Kaiser Permanente) is the largest independent inter-specialty medical group in Oregon and Southwest Washington. Its community health workers screen patients for social drivers of health to build customized action plans. Since its launch, the organization has served more than 5,000 patients.

"As a health care delivery organization, we need to be focusing on what our members want and what our members need," Leong Koh, MD, president and CEO of [Northwest Permanente](#), told the [American Medical Association](#) (AMA). "We have to be willing to train ourselves and be able to take care of our patients in this culturally responsive way that they are telling us they want."

"[Salud en Español](#)" focuses on enhancing the health care experience of Latinos. Physicians, medical assistants, nurses, navigators, support staff and back-office staff fluent in Spanish provide care for Spanish-speaking individuals. Interpreters are available for those who speak other languages.

Created to address racial disparities in diabetes, cancer, heart disease and more, the initiative aims to build trust within the Latino community and promote education about these conditions in a comfortable, inclusive environment.

Northwest Permanente has more than 1,500 medical professionals, including physicians and other clinicians.

Its newly launched [Center for Black Health and Wellness](#), a primary care center led by a team of Black health professionals, seeks to elevate the care experience for Black people by providing competent, culturally sensitive and equitable care.

“Data has shown that when a clinician looks like you and understands your culture and history, it really does have a significant impact not only on lifespan but also adopting that proactive care that we’re all seeking here,” Koh said.

The center emphasizes [screening](#), prevention and closing the health gap for various health conditions, including [high blood pressure](#), which is more common in Black folks.

“Health care and the way we deliver care cannot be static,” Koh said. “We need to adjust our current practices and establish new ones. This is part of the equation of building trust with our members.”

To read more, click [#Health Equity](#). There, you’ll find headlines such as “[Many Latinos Skip Wellness Checkups](#),” “[Amid Medicaid ‘Unwinding,’ Many States Wind Up Expanding](#)” and “[Small-Town Patients Face Big Hurdles as Rural Hospitals Cut Cancer Care](#).”