

Nonprofit Encourages Black Medical Students to Enter Neurology Field With Grant

Black patients treated by Black doctors are more likely to agree to preventive care and treatment.

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With support from a new national grant, the Charlottesville, Virginia, nonprofit [Alliance to Cure Cavernous Malformations](#) (ACCM) will encourage Black medical students to consider a career in neurology.

Earlier this month, Justworks, a technology company that supports small businesses, awarded four national finalists its Spring Forward Fund Grants of up to \$25,000. The grants are awarded to nonprofits seeking more equitable access for underserved or underrepresented populations.

ACCM will use the funds to boost its Breaking Barriers to Black Neurology program, which promotes diversity in neurology, Jessica Biggs, the nonprofit's health equity program development and outreach specialist, told [Daily Progress](#).

Many studies have shown that people of color prefer having primary care physicians of the same race or ethnicity as them. In fact, a national analysis published in [JAMA Network Open](#) found that [Black people who live in counties with more Black primary care physicians](#) live longer, providing compelling evidence that diversity in medicine may aid in reducing longstanding [racial health disparities](#).

Other studies have shown that Black patients treated by Black doctors are [more satisfied](#) with their health care and more likely to agree to and receive preventive care.

"When we talked to Black patients, they wanted to go to doctors who looked like them," Biggs said. "They're missing out on care and treatments. We don't have the populations to support [clinical trials](#)."

Biggs added that doctors of color are underrepresented in the neurosciences, per American Medical Association statistics. Additionally, she pointed out that specializing in neurology means that students have to spend more time in school, which poses a financial burden.

The program will provide first-year students with information about neurology as a career. It will also offer fellowships and grants to help medical students cover travel expenses to attend conferences.

ACCM promotes outreach to people of Black, Latino and Eastern European Ashkenazi descent to help overcome delays in diagnosis of cavernous malformations, which are abnormally formed blood vessels that can develop in the brain or spinal cord and can cause headache, seizures and strokes. Some people wait as long as seven years for an accurate diagnosis of cavernous malformation, according to Biggs. Patients of color may wait twice as long.

“Getting a diagnosis sooner would help quality of life,” Biggs said. “When we do get a diagnosis for these patients, it is more debilitating and harder to ignore.”

To read more, click [#Diversity](#) or [#Health Equity](#). There, you’ll find headlines such as “[New Group Aims to Increase Black Men in Medicine,](#)” “[PrEP, a Key HIV Prevention Tool, Isn’t Reaching Black Women](#)” and “[Annual 5K Raises Awareness of Black Health Issues.](#)”