

Anti-Racism Commitment and Action Plan for Canadian Medical Schools

Background and Context

In June 2020, AFMC prioritized addressing systemic racism in medical education as part of its strategic framework, marking a significant step toward equity and inclusion. This commitment catalyzed the creation of the Committee on Black Health, Innovation, and Advancement and strengthened the long-standing work of the Indigenous Health Committee. Building on these efforts, AFMC incorporated anti-racism objectives into its 2021-2023 and 2024-27 strategic plans. Key initiatives include faculty leadership workshops addressing racism in medical education and healthcare and the development of a national anti-racism commitment and integrated action plan.

The commitment and action plan are not separate entities; they are intentionally aligned and interdependent. The action plan is a direct extension of the commitment, designed to translate AFMC's vision into tangible, measurable steps for dismantling systemic racism in medical education. Guided by the AFMC EDI & Anti-Racism Committee, with engagement from partners such as AFMC's Committees on Indigenous Health and Black Health, Innovation, and Advancement, and following the Inclusive Excellence Framework's five domains—Access & Success, Climate & Intergroup Relations, Education & Scholarship, Institutional Infrastructure, and Community Engagement—this initiative reflects a collective effort to foster accountability, ensure that anti-racism is embedded in every level of academic medicine, and drive systemic change in Canadian medical schools.

Acknowledgement

Racism is a social disease. It affects everyone in a society, not just those who are its victims.

We owe it to each other to build a Canada based on our shared future, a future of healing and trust.

..... Justice Murray Sinclair

Landmark documents and influential sources:

- ◆ [Changing Systems, Transforming Lives: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024-2028](#)
- ◆ [Scarborough Charter: On Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion in Canadian Higher Education: Principles, Actions, And Accountabilities](#)
- ◆ [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)
- ◆ [The Traumatizing Impact of Racism in Canadians of Colour](#)
- ◆ [Social Determinants and Inequities in Health for Black Canadians: A Snapshot](#)

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The Why

The Association of Faculties of Medicine in Canada (AFMC) is committed to confronting the longstanding and deeply entrenched issues of racism and discrimination within the medical education system and healthcare delivery. Recognizing the severe health inequities faced by Indigenous and Black communities, the AFMC aims to address the systemic racism that is woven into the very fabric of healthcare in Canada. By acknowledging the harmful effects of colonialism and white supremacist structures, the AFMC calls for transformative change in how medical education and care are structured and delivered. The organization's commitment to dismantling these structures is reflected in their focus on fostering a more inclusive, culturally safe, and trauma-informed system that actively seeks input from marginalized communities.

This document is an essential step in initiating meaningful change, aiming to create a more equitable and just healthcare system for all. By embedding these principles into medical education, Canadian medical schools can play a transformative role in addressing health inequities, fostering anti-racist practices, and advancing a healthcare system that serves all Canadians equitably.



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The Why

Health equity is a major concern within the delivery of medical care and medical education; racism and discrimination are fatal – people die in the process of receiving inadequate care as a direct result.

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Canadian healthcare has a long history of harm against Indigenous and Black people specifically, which continues to persist today. Targeted and specific action to address racism and its health consequences against all minority groups, with a specific focus on anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism is essential, given the unique and ongoing impact on these communities.

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Race is a sociopolitical construct rooted in white supremacist knowledge systems, which have perpetuated historical medical atrocities, intergenerational trauma, and the pervasiveness of racism and colonization within health care.

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Academic medicine has a history of individual and systemic racism that continues to permeate learning and healthcare delivery environments, affecting patients, educators and care practitioners.

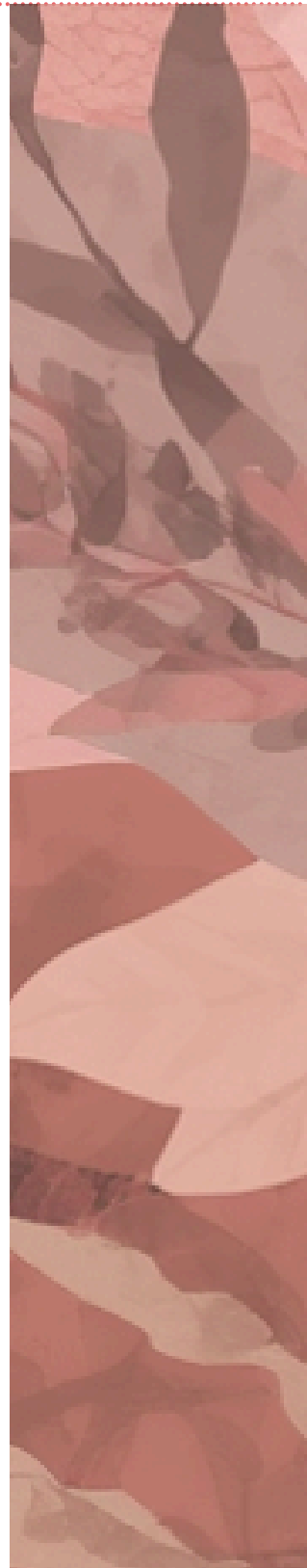
Systemic racism is a major driver of health inequities in Canada. The health outcomes of Indigenous Peoples are directly related to the social and structural determinants of health, including the embedded racism in health care systems and medical education (TRC 2015; Allan and Smylie 2015; Ly and Crowshoe 2015). In addition, there is evidence of anti-Black racism in the medical curriculum (Joneja et. al 2022) and the existence of bias and discrimination in areas of practice such as admissions; recruitment and retention (including student retention), and promotion of faculty and staff.

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Medical education is based upon colonial white supremacist knowledge systems, with patriarchy, cis heteronormativity, and ableism also comprising its foundation. This framework has created an existential gap—manifested in the lack of inclusive pedagogical and professional practices—that continues to perpetuate inequality and racism within medical education and practice.

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Direct and measured intervention is necessary to root out racism across and within our learning contexts and to provide culturally safe and competent healthcare.



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Commitment

- **As an organization, the AFMC denounces racism and all forms of discrimination** and commits to dismantling the systems of structural discrimination and oppression, legacies of white supremacy, patriarchy, cis heteronormativity, and ableism within medical education. This responsibility is shared across the entire AFMC, ensuring that anti-racism efforts are embedded in every aspect of our operations.
- **We commit to developing and implementing a national plan of action** that operationalizes the anti-racism commitment of Canadian medical school to be completed within one year, with direct engagement from the AFMC Board of Directors.
- **We commit to addressing racism in our institutions and in the delivery of medical education.** We envision dismantling of discriminatory practices occurring in all areas of the business of medical education and academic medicine, including but not limited to admissions, curriculum, faculty development, promotion research, policy and operations.
- **We further commit to serving as advocates for systemic reform and national action** to address racism across the healthcare system. This includes acknowledging and actively working to dismantle both systemic racism and individual racism within healthcare settings and learning environments.
- **Success will be measured using meaningful equity-driven metrics** that prioritize the lived experiences of those affected by racism and inequity, with transparent reporting to ensure accountability to the populations we serve.
- **Schools may have additional, locally-specific anti-racism commitments and actions** beyond this collective commitment.
- **The AFMC Strategic plan will be explicit in its commitment to anti-racism** throughout its structures.
- **We are dedicated to engaging in reflexive practice to continually challenge oppressive structures** and foster inclusive environments, with a clear emphasis on shared responsibility throughout AFMC.

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National Action Items

Access and Success

Ensuring equitable access, representation, and advancement for underrepresented groups in medical education.

- 1.1 Increase Diversity in Admissions, Residency, Faculty & Leadership
- 1.2 National Data & Accountability for Representation
- 1.3 Retention, Promotion & Mentorship

Climate & Intergroup Relations

Creating safe, trauma-informed, and accountable learning and working environments.

- 2.1 Train and Empower Leadership to Disrupt Racism
- 2.2 Foster Culturally Safe Clinical Environments

Education & Scholarship

Embedding anti-racist and equity-oriented teaching, learning, and research practices.

- 3.1 Conduct Rigorous Curriculum Audits
- 3.2 Integrate Anti-Racist Curricula Across Faculties
- 3.3 Faculty Development for Inclusive Pedagogy

Institutional Infrastructure

Building systems and governance structures that sustain anti-racism and inclusive excellence.

- 4.1 Develop Stand-Alone National Anti-Racism Policy Framework
- 4.2 Recognize & Compensate Anti-Racism Contributions
- 4.3 National Accountability Mechanisms & Resources
- 4.4 Build Leadership Capacity for Governance
- 4.5 Resourcing & Sustainability

Community Engagement

Partnering with communities to co-create equitable, socially accountable medical education.

- 5.1 Establish Formalized Community Partnerships
- 5.2 Integrate Community-Defined Success into Accountability

Explore the full
action plan:



**AFMC National
Anti-Racism Action Plan**

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With Thanks

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the following individuals for their invaluable contributions to this document: **Sukhveer Bains** and **Natalya Mason**, co-chairs of the AFMC EDI & Anti-Racism Committee; **Kannin Osei-Tutu** and **Mireille Norris**, chair and vice-chair of the AFMC Committee on Black Health, Innovation, and Advancement; **Wayne Clark** and **Darlene Kitty**, co-chairs of the AFMC Indigenous Health Committee; **Joseph LeBlanc**, AFMC Vice President, Social Accountability; **Melissa Shahin**, AFMC Chief Strategy Officer; **Aïda Bangoura**, AFMC Manager, Social Accountability; and **Marie Horton**, AFMC Social Accountability Strategist.

Their expertise, dedication, and commitment have been essential in shaping this work, and we deeply appreciate their ongoing efforts to promote equity, justice, and inclusivity within medical education.



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Appendix A References and Additional Resources supporting Best Practices

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