

APRIL IS MINORITY HEALTH MONTH

More than 100 years ago, Booker T. Washington established Negro Health Week, for the purpose of calling to the attention of black people that they had serious health problems that needed to be dealt with, especially infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and syphilis. Spread of these diseases from blacks to whites was of great concern to white public health officials, and Professor Washington, an icon in the Negro community, was recruited to influence the black population to be more hygienic for the benefit of the white population.

Negro Health Week persisted until 2001, when it was changed to National Minority Health Month, which had a more Afrocentric purpose with its emphasis on what was to become healthcare disparities. It also focused on the aims and objectives of the federal program called Healthy People that takes stock of progress made in decreasing disparities every ten years. Eventually, National Minority Health Month was developed into the National Minority Quality Forum (NMQF) by Dr. Gary Puckrein. This organization holds an annual conference in which medical, political, business, legal, and financial leaders gather in Washington, DC to discuss strategies for eliminating healthcare disparities and for achieving equity in healthcare delivery. The Minority Health Institute has participated in these sessions since their inception, and MHI President/CEO Dr. Richard Allen Williams received a Lifetime Achievement Award for his activism and accomplishments on behalf of minorities.

Activities designed to focus attention on health problems of minorities are also carried out with particular emphasis during April by the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities of the National Institutes of Health. These include educational seminars, conferences, webinars, and focus groups.

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