



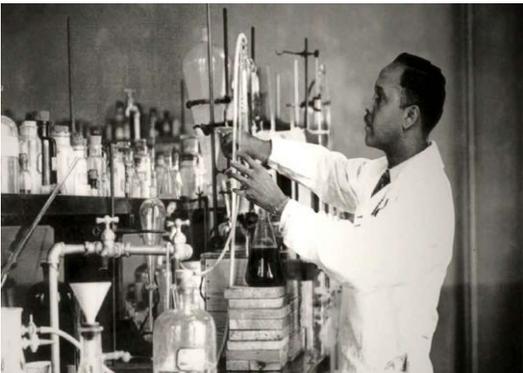
BACKGROUND

In celebration of Black History Month, we would like to recognize the tremendous contributions Black Americans have made. Carter G. Woodson, the founder of this celebration, hoped to raise awareness of African American contributions to civilization, so he helped organized the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), and created Negro History Week in 1925. This week was chosen in February and encompassed the birthdays of both Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. The response was overwhelming and by the time of Woodson's death in 1950, Negro History Week had become an essential part of American life. The Black Awakening of the 1960s dramatically expanded the consciousness of Black Americans about the importance of Black history. Additionally, the Civil Rights movement focused all Americans on the contributions of Black Americans to our history and culture, but it was not until 1976 that President Gerald Ford officially recognized the month. President Ford urged Americans to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.” So here we are, 45 years later after the U.S. officially recognized Black History Month and we would like you take part in its observance. To kick off this celebration, here are some incredible Black Leaders in Medicine that have helped shape healthcare!

A FEW INFLUENTIAL AFRICAN AMERICANS IN HEALTHCARE



Dr. Alexa Irene Canady, MD, was a pioneer of her time, both for women physicians and African Americans, when she became the first African American woman neurosurgeon in the United States in 1981. "The greatest challenge I faced in becoming a neurosurgeon was believing it was possible."



"It all began with a simple little bean," **Dr. Percy Julian** Ph.D. wrote of the Calabar bean. His curiosity led him to pioneer the creation of drugs and other chemicals from substances previously found only in plants. His synthesis of physostigmine, found in the Calabar bean, yielded a treatment for glaucoma. From the soybean, he created a fire retardant used to put out gasoline fires on aircraft carriers during World War II; the soybean also became the foundation for hydrocortisone treatments for arthritis and for hormonal treatments.

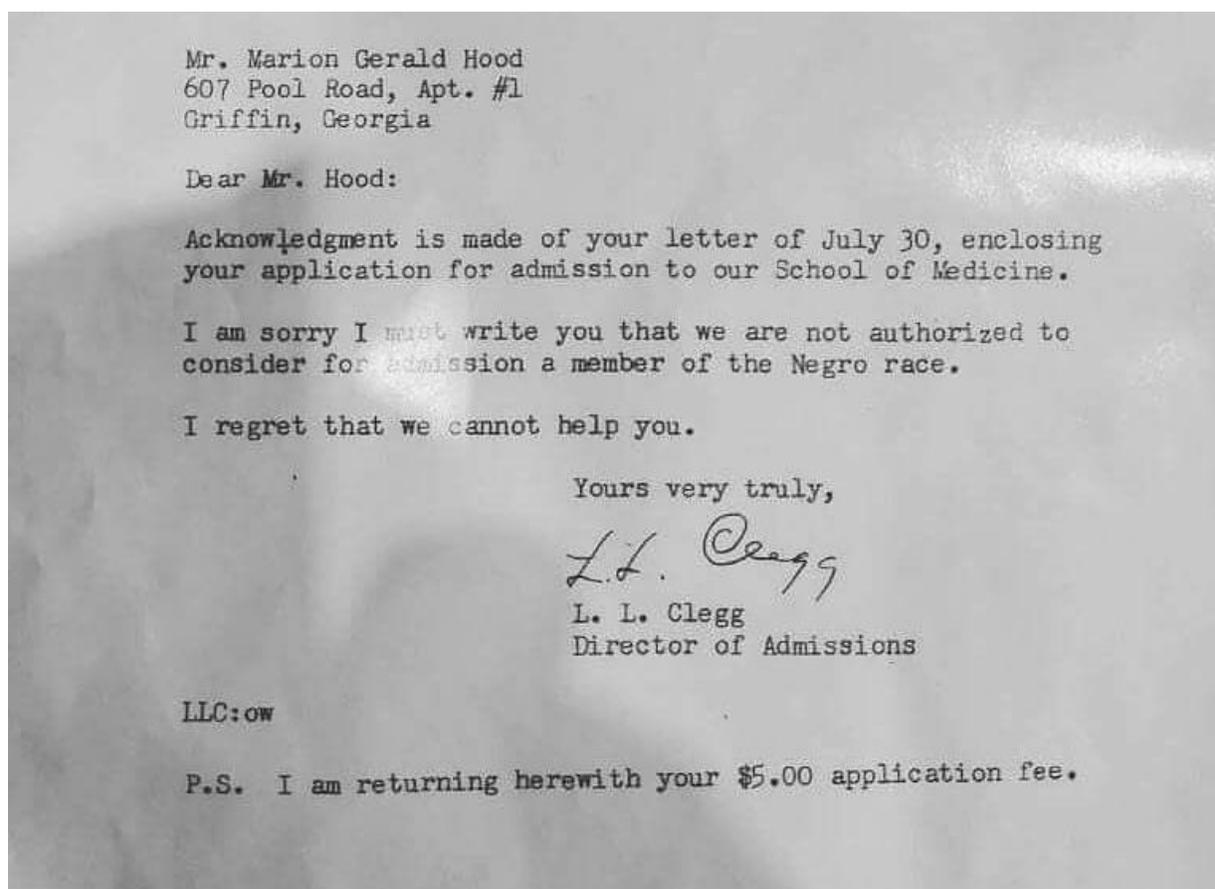


Dr. Patricia Bath, MD was the first African American to complete a residency in ophthalmology and the first African American female doctor to receive a medical patent. She invented the Laserphaco Probe for cataract treatment in 1986. She was appointed as the first woman chair of ophthalmology in the United States, at Drew-UCLA in 1983.



Dr. Charles Drew, MD pioneered methods of storing blood plasma for transfusion and organized the first large-scale blood bank in the U.S. During World War II, Drew was appointed Supervisor of the Blood Transfusion Association for New York City and oversaw the "Blood for Britain" program, which saved the lives of many wounded soldiers. He resigned in protest of the United States War Department's policy that African American blood should be separated from the blood of White Americans. Drew eventually became Chief of Staff and Medical Director of Freedman's Hospital and Head of Surgery at Howard University. There is now a medical school named in his honor located in Los Angeles, CA.

Black Heath Disparities and Bias



In 1959, Marion Gerald Hood was denied admittance to Emory University School of Medicine due to his race.

Although we are taking time to acknowledge many of the amazing contributions from the Black community, it would be remiss of us to not mention some of the barriers as well as disparities plaguing the African American community that we as future physicians should be working to mitigate.

- African Americans are 3x as likely to suffer from kidney failure than Caucasians
- African Americans have the highest mortality rate for all cancers combined compared with any other racial and ethnic group
- A 2012 Meta-Analysis shows that Black patients were 22% less likely than White to receive “any analgesia”, and 29% less likely than White to receive treatment with opioids for a similar painful condition
- In a 2016 study, Physicians were more likely to underestimate the pain of black patients relative to nonblack patients and 50% of medical students believed at least one false belief regarding black patients
- The CDC reports that African Americans are experiencing 2.6x higher cases of COVID-19, 4.7x higher hospitalization rates, and 2.1x more death from COVID-19 compared to white counterparts
- After years of medical exploitation of black bodies, (i.e. U.S. Public Health Service Syphilis Study at Tuskegee, Henrietta Lacks, etc.) many African Americans have significant mistrust in the U.S. government as well as the Healthcare system. This has caused severe hesitancy with the COVID-19 vaccine.

We as future physicians must work together in order to mend the broken relationship between medicine and all marginalized communities.