



**American Hospital
Association**

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November 25, 2008

Carolyn Barley Britton, M.D.
President

Nelson L. Adams, M.D.
Past President

National Medical Association
1012 Tenth Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Doctors Britton and Adams:

In response to the discussion at the recent meeting of the American Hospital Association's (AHA) Special Advisory Group on Improving Hospital Care for Minorities (SAG), and the specific request of the SAG, AHA is pleased to join with the National Medical Association (NMA) and the American Medical Association (AMA) in seeking to reduce health disparities, and in striving to open opportunities for racial and ethnic minorities to become health care professionals at all levels of the system. To that end, the AHA will work with the NMA, AMA and the hospital field to:

- Work diligently to recruit African-Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities into medicine, nursing, health care administration, and a variety of other fields;
- Continue to build on efforts to reduce health disparities among African-Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities; and
- Encourage health professions schools, and licensing and accrediting bodies, to make cultural competence a part of the preparation and on-going expectation of all who interact with patients.

The recent and historic AMA-NMA interchange has called attention to how the history of health care in this country, and the exclusion of physicians of color from organized medicine, may have led to some of the distrust of the health care system, and to disparities in health outcomes that racial and ethnic minorities experience today when interacting with hospitals and clinicians.

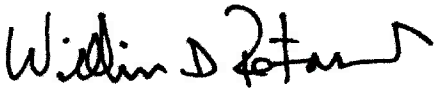


Doctors Britton and Adams
November 25, 2008
Page 2

While there is no evidence that AHA supported restrictive policies in its own institutional membership, it is a fact that for many years hospitals in many parts of the country were segregated with privileges being denied to physicians who were not members of the AMA. Some hospitals also refused to admit minority applicants to nurse training programs, and some failed to provide services to minority patients, or only provided services in "black wards." These discriminatory policies led directly to the establishment of separate and unequal hospitals for minorities and to disparities in health care that are evident today.

While some progress has been made in these critical areas, we all agree that more needs to be done. We thank you for your leadership and look forward to working together to make much greater strides in the future.

Sincerely,



William D. Petasnick
Chair
Board of Trustees



Richard J. Umbdenstock
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cc: Mohammad N. Akhter, M.D.
Executive Director