Leading Research and Innovation in Minority Health and Health Disparities

The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) envisions an America in which all populations will have an equal opportunity to live long, healthy, and productive lives. Since the Heckler Report was published 35 years ago, NIMHD and its predecessors have been establishing a minority health and health disparities research agenda, building the capacity of institutions and organizations to conduct scientific research on disparities, and fostering the training and career development of individuals from underrepresented populations in the fields of science and medicine.

Congress elevates ORMH to become the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD), which launches programs to support minority health and health disparities research, training, and community engagement and to encourage diversity in the scientific workforce.

NIMHD establishes the Centers of Excellence for Research Education and Training in colleges and universities to address health disparities through research, research training, and education, and community engagement and to increase the number of investigators from populations subject to health disparities.

NIMHD hosts the first NIH Science of Eliminating Health Disparities Summit and announces the Intramural Research Program to create training and mentorship opportunities for early stage and seasoned investigators to enhance NIH’s diversity of scientists and research disciplines.

Through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (P.L. 111-148), NIMHD becomes the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), highlighting the law’s emphasis on health disparities and minority health. NIMHD launches a 2-week intensive Translational Health Disparities Course, “Integrating Principles of Science, Practice, and Policy in Health Disparities Research.”

NIMHD appoints William G. Coleman Jr., Ph.D., as its first permanent scientific director. He is the first African-American scientific director in the history of the NIH Intramural Research Program.

NIMHD celebrates 30 years since becoming the Office of Minority Programs (OMP). The Office of Research on Minority Health (ORMH) is established within NIH. It develops a research agenda for minority health at NIH and launches the D.C. Infant Mortality Initiative, reducing African-American infant mortality in the nation’s capital by 28%.

NIMHD holds the second Science of Eliminating Health Disparities Summit in partnership with the NIH Institutes and Centers, NIH agencies, and 14 of 15 federal executive departments, highlighting strategies, policies, and models from around the world to combat social, economic, and environmental factors that cause health disparities.

The NIMHD Scientific Advancement Plan is established to improve health equity by advancing the science of minority health and health disparities. The Scientific Advancement Plan outlines NIMHD’s approach to champion the fields of minority health and health disparities research to both contribute to and benefit from these advances in the interest of health disparity populations and to foster the next generation of researchers to lead discoveries that will promote health equity.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Report of the Secretary’s Task Force on Black and Minority Health (the Heckler Report) documents the existence of health disparities among racial and ethnic minorities in the United States.

“While we are making incremental progress, it is time to accelerate the pace. It is a daunting challenge, but it is surmountable if you take your role seriously and make your contribution to win this race.”

—John Ruffin, Ph.D.

NIMHD celebrates 10 years as an Institute at NIH. 20 years since being established as a Center, and 30 years since becoming the Office of Minority Programs in the NIH Office of the Director.