

# Diversity, Inclusion and Health Justice

An Interview with Julia E. Iyasere, M.D., Dalio Center for Health Justice, NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital

**EDITORS' NOTE** A native of California, Dr. Julia Iyasere moved to the East Coast to attend Yale University where she graduated with a B.S. in molecular biology with a focus in neuroscience. After a year working in cancer cell biology and cell signaling cascades at Harvard Medical School, she joined the Columbia community at Columbia College of Physician and Surgeons, eventually choosing to pursue a dual degree with the Columbia Business School and graduating with an M.D./M.B.A. After completing her residency in Internal Medicine at Columbia, Dr. Iyasere stayed as Chief Resident before joining the Section of Hospital Medicine. She completed a part-time fellowship in Medical Simulation at the NewYork-Presbyterian Simulation Center during her first year with the Division. Dr. Iyasere was the Director of LEAD Academy, a physician leadership and career development program at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital and served as the Associate DIO for GME and Associate Program Director for the Columbia Internal Medicine Residency Program until she assumed her current role in July 2020.



Julia E. Iyasere

**INSTITUTION BRIEF** Located in New York City, NewYork-Presbyterian (nyp.org) is affiliated with two of the nation's leading medical colleges, Weill Cornell Medicine and Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons. NewYork-Presbyterian provides state-of-the-art inpatient, ambulatory, and preventive care in all areas of medicine, and is committed to excellence in patient care, education, research, and community service at ten hospital campuses: NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center, NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center, NewYork-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian Allen Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian Westchester Division, NewYork-Presbyterian Lower Manhattan Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian Lawrence Hospital in Bronxville, NewYork-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital and NewYork-Presbyterian Queens.

**Will you provide an overview of the Dalio Center for Health Justice at NewYork-Presbyterian and how you define its mission?**

With the launch of the new Dalio Center for Health Justice, NewYork-Presbyterian will be

a leader in understanding and improving health equity and go one step further, to proactively address the systemic inequalities that create conditions for poor health by addressing the structural factors that determine health outcomes, for example systemic racism, education, and community development. Through key areas of action, the Center will have an ever-widening impact by creating a robust equity database, improving health disparities, addressing social determinants of health (SDOH), expanding access

to care, and enriching education - first, within the NYP enterprise, our employees, staff, and patients, second, within our local community, and third, more widely, through advocacy nationally.

**How will the Dalio Center for Health Justice work to improve the health and well-being of its patients and communities?**

First, we inaugurated our initial event in a series of symposia dedicated to diversity, inclusion, and health justice. Our goal is to engage in discussions about diversity, inclusion, and healthcare equity across the organization, highlighting faculty research and innovations in the field of healthcare inequality and/or diversity.

Second, using a data-driven approach and in collaboration with hospital operations for implementation, we will develop new institutional projects focused on patient care improvement and access to care. We will support ongoing institutional efforts, such as the redesign of our ambulatory specialty clinics, as well as aide in the development of new endeavors, like the nascent Black Transplant Initiative, with its mission to expand access to comprehensive organ-specific and pre-transplant care for Black patients in New York.

Third, by coordinating and amplifying ongoing community-based initiatives, in close collaboration with our university partners, experts in the field of health disparities, and local community-based organizations, the Center will promote NYP's ongoing community mission to improve the health of our communities through community/population health initiatives, understanding and championing economic empowerment, social engagement, workforce development, neighborhood revitalization, and education.

Finally, the Center will impact the broader community through strategic partnerships and advocacy for public policy advancements, leading the national conversation around health inequity and becoming a shining example of profound and necessary change.

**What excited you about the opportunity to lead the Dalio Center for Health Justice at NewYork-Presbyterian and how do you plan to focus your efforts?**

There is so much that excites me about the work of the Center – it's truly the role of a career. I love Medicine, I always have. Now, being able to dedicate my time to identifying ways to make healthcare and health better, what is not to be excited about? Given the potential breadth of the work that can be done, a data driven approach to our work is paramount. As a foundation to the work of the Center, the early development of a detailed database will be vital to help us identify healthcare inequities that we will work to eliminate.

**How critical is it for the Dalio Center for Health Justice to build a diverse and inclusive workforce in order to mirror the diversity of the communities it serves?**

I think it's critical for every organization to build a diverse workforce. The benefit of diversity in the workplace has been well described and leads to improvements in creative thinking, problem solving, and innovation. However, diversity in Medicine, given the documented benefits to patient outcomes, is especially important. Given the work that we do and the central role the Center has within our organization, it's critical that we not only build a diverse workforce within the Center, but help others across the institution do the same.

**What advice do you offer to young people interested in a career in medicine during this uncertain and unprecedented time?**

There is so much critical work that we need to do – and no, it's not easy – the things that really need doing rarely are. But for me, for every moment of challenge there has been an equal or greater moment of reward. Medicine is truly a remarkable field, one that still fills me with excitement and awe. Yes, this year has been unprecedented in many ways. But, buoyed by the ground swell of social activism across the country, changes that have been long sought in medicine are now possible. For those interested, explore that interest. Learn more about the field and the multiplicity of possibilities within it. ●