



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Health Care Leaders Meet, Address Health Care Disparity**

*Joint Commission, American Hospital Association Forum Initiate Plan to Improve Health Equity*

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Ill. – September 16, 2016) An inaugural Health Equity Forum was convened today by The Joint Commission and American Hospital Association. The forum brought together more than 50 key health care leaders from across the country to raise awareness, collaboratively develop a common set of aims and use quality improvement tools to address and reduce health and health care disparity.

Health care inequality encompasses three areas: access, treatment and outcomes. Today's forum focused on addressing disparity in these three areas to align with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's "[Triple Aim](#)" pillars of improving population health and experience of care.

Issues surrounding health care disparity have been recognized for several years within the health care quality improvement community, but little progress has been made in addressing them. Causes of disparity include language barriers, hearing and physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, race and religion.

"Zero harm is not possible unless we address health inequity. Health care disparities are serious impediments to improving population health. We must effectively close these gaps in our health care system," said Mark R. Chassin, MD, FACP, MPP, MPH, president and CEO, The Joint Commission.

“Pinpointing why disparities in care exist and eliminating them must be a priority in every health care setting. To create healthy communities, we must embrace the diversity of the individuals we serve, as well as break down the hospital’s traditional four walls to provide care in a more convenient way where patients live and work,” said Rick Pollack, president and CEO, American Hospital Association. “We are pleased to partner with The Joint Commission to improve equity of care for everyone and promote greater diversity across the health care field.”

Forum co-hosts Ronald Wyatt, MD, MHA, patient safety officer and medical director, Division of Healthcare Improvement, The Joint Commission, and M. Tomás León, MBA, president and CEO, Institute for Diversity in Health Management, an affiliate of the American Hospital Association, organized the forum in an effort to speed up progress in addressing and ending inequality which they see as an impediment to achieving zero harm in health care.

Invited speakers included:

- David W. Baker, MD, MPH, FACP, executive vice president, Division of Health Care Quality Evaluation, The Joint Commission
- Tamarah Duperval-Brownlee, MD, vice president, Care Excellence, Ascension Health System
- Kedar Mate, MD, senior vice president, Research and Development, Innovation and Faculty, Institute for Healthcare Improvement
- Bruce Siegel, MD, MPH, president and CEO, America’s Essential Hospitals
- Ninfa M. Saunders, PhD, president and CEO, Navicent Health, American Hospital Association Equity of Care Award Honoree
- Cheri Wilson, MS, MHA, Work Force Inclusion
- Kimberlydawn Wisdom, MD, MS, senior vice president of Community Health & Equity, chief wellness and diversity officer, Henry Ford Health System

The forum included an afternoon workout to develop a consensus document. Based on the next steps determined at the conclusion of the forum, The Joint Commission will release a white paper in early 2017 and a set of recommendations for health care organizations to improve equity will be developed.

For more information on the Health Equity Forum and materials on health equity, please visit The Joint Commission Health Equity Portal [here](#). The AHA has developed many resources to help health care leaders on their efforts related to health equity, which are available at [www.equityofcare.org/resources](http://www.equityofcare.org/resources).

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**About The Joint Commission**

Founded in 1951, [The Joint Commission](http://www.jointcommission.org) seeks to continuously improve health care for the public, in collaboration with other stakeholders, by evaluating health care organizations and inspiring them to excel in providing safe and effective care of the highest quality and value. The Joint Commission accredits and certifies nearly 21,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. An independent, nonprofit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Learn more about The Joint Commission at [www.jointcommission.org](http://www.jointcommission.org).

**About the AHA**

The AHA is a not-for-profit association of health care provider organizations and individuals that are committed to the improvement of health in their communities. The AHA is the national advocate for its members, which include nearly 5,000 hospitals, health care systems, networks and other providers of care. Founded in 1898, the AHA provides education for health care leaders and is a source of information on health care issues and trends. For more information, visit the website at [www.aha.org](http://www.aha.org).