



**NEWS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**The Joint Commission, Kaiser Permanente name first recipient of Bernard J. Tyson National Award for Excellence in Pursuit of Healthcare Equity**

*UMass Memorial Health makes significant improvements in adherence to well-child visits among pediatric patients of color in the height of the pandemic*

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Illinois, November 2, 2021) – A UMass Memorial Health initiative that improved adherence to well-child visits among Black and Latino pediatric patients has been named the recipient of the inaugural Bernard J. Tyson National Award for Excellence in Pursuit of Healthcare Equity by The Joint Commission and Kaiser Permanente. The award recognizes health care organizations and their partners that led initiatives to achieve a measurable, sustained reduction in one or more health care disparities.

In its initiative, *Prioritizing Child Health: Promoting Adherence to Well-Child Visits*, a UMass Memorial Health team identified and addressed disparities in adherence to well-child visits in Worcester, Massachusetts, guided by the use of robust data stratified by race, ethnicity and language. These efforts resulted in a 16% improvement in adherence to well-child visits among Black patients and a 12% improvement among Latino patients.

The multidisciplinary team interviewed patient families, ambulatory practice managers, pediatricians and other health system leadership. Together, they identified barriers to adherence for well-child visits, including transportation, language and scheduling. To support parents and improve accessibility and adherence to regular well-child visits, UMass Memorial Health providers implemented multiple strategies to overcome these barriers, including:

- Conducting well-child visits during acute care appointments
- Scheduling the next visit at the time of the current visit
- Providing patients and their families with an information sheet highlighting the importance of preventive care visits
- Implementing an improved reminder system
- Making telehealth appointments available
- Arranging transportation
- Actively reaching out to patients who canceled or were “no-shows” for their visits to reschedule

- Creating a well-child tip sheet to help measure success

The nine-month initiative, which coincided with the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, showed that adherence to child well-visits among Black children rose from 59% to 75%; among Latino pediatric patients, adherence rose from 64% at baseline to 76%. UMass Memorial Health's results also showed reduced disparities in adherence between patients identifying as white and those identifying as Latino or Black.

“UMass Memorial Health's success in reducing health care disparities among Black and Latino pediatric patients is well deserving of the first Tyson Award,” said David W. Baker, MD, MPH, FACP, executive vice president, Healthcare Quality Evaluation, The Joint Commission. “The project team was able to make a significant improvement in well-child visit adherence in less than a year, showing all health care leaders that health care disparities can be improved with even small changes and must be taken seriously.”

“Health care disparities must take priority with organizations as a patient safety issue. UMass Memorial Health is leading the way with this initiative by improving access to and utilization of preventive care. Its initiative serves as an excellent example for all organizations to take purposeful action to improve health care disparities all across the country,” said Ana Pujols McKee, MD, executive vice president, chief medical officer and chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer, The Joint Commission.

“Bernard J. Tyson embodied Kaiser Permanente's commitment to addressing the health care inequities that persist in the U.S. health care system,” said Andrew Bindman, MD, executive vice president and chief medical officer, Kaiser Permanente. “The work done at UMass Memorial Health to improve the health and wellbeing of young patients within the most vulnerable communities, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when too many children have fallen behind on routine vaccinations and preventive care, is consistent with Bernard's vision.”

Leveraging this success, the UMass Memorial Health team plans to next refine the health system's social determinants of health (SDOH) screening and referral system by applying an antiracism lens to identify how structural racism and discrimination act as barriers, and to identify optimal strategies that ensure equitable implementation of SDOH interventions.

UMass Memorial Health will be recognized during a virtual award presentation on November 19, 2021 at 11 a.m. CT. Please [click here](#) for more information and to register to attend the ceremony.

The Joint Commission and Kaiser Permanente have also recognized several additional organizations that submitted applications for the Tyson Award. These organizations are undertaking extraordinary efforts to address health care disparities. A list of these organizations and their initiatives is available [here](#).

The Bernard J. Tyson National Award for Excellence in Pursuit of Healthcare Equity honors the late Kaiser Permanente chairman and CEO's memory by recognizing extraordinary efforts made by health care organizations, with the goal of inspiring other health care organizations to take action to improve health care disparities.

For more information on the Tyson Award, UMass Memorial Health's initiative and more, please visit the [Tyson Award webpage](#).

###

**About The Joint Commission**

Founded in 1951, [The Joint Commission](#) 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 more than 22,000 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).

**Joint Commission Media Contact:**

Hannah Miller

[hmillier@jointcommission.org](mailto:hmillier@jointcommission.org)

630-792-5174

**About Kaiser Permanente**

Kaiser Permanente is committed to helping shape the future of health care. We are recognized as one of America's leading health care providers and not-for-profit health plans. Founded in 1945, Kaiser Permanente has a mission to provide high-quality, affordable health care services and to improve the health of our members and the communities we serve. We currently serve almost 12.5 million members in 8 states and the District of Columbia. Care for members and patients is focused on their total health and guided by their personal Permanente Medical Group physicians, specialists, and team of caregivers. Our expert and caring medical teams are empowered and supported by industry-leading technology advances and tools for health promotion, disease prevention, state-of-the-art care delivery, and world-class chronic disease management. Kaiser Permanente is dedicated to care innovations, clinical research, health education, and the support of community health. For more information, go to [about.kp.org](http://about.kp.org)

**Kaiser Permanente Media Contact:**

Hilary Costa

[hilary.c.costa@kp.org](mailto:hilary.c.costa@kp.org)

510-406-6654