



Asian Neuropsychological Association

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April 14, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
NW Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Robert R. Redfield, MD
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Anthony S. Fauci, MD
Director
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
5601 Fishers Lane
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Vice President Pence, Secretary Azar, and Directors Redfield and Fauci,

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to take its toll on the physical and mental health, and economic well-being of American people. Unfortunately, the impact of the virus has been disproportionately pronounced on ethnic minority Americans who are among the most vulnerable to national stressors. Given the seriousness of the current situation, the Asian Neuropsychological Association would like to highlight the negative impact that COVID-19 has had on ethnic minority Americans and provide recommendations to rectify these inequities. In doing so, we affirm support for the statements provided by the American Psychological Association and the Hispanic Neuropsychological Society to lobby for equal access to adequate healthcare for all.

Data from numerous states indicate that the mortality rate for African Americans, Latino/as, and Native Americans from COVID-19 is considerably higher than for Caucasians. This grimly illustrates the healthcare disparities these Americans have experienced for centuries from a multitude of factors including poverty, lack of access to healthcare, inequitable healthcare when available, and stressful physical and hostile social environmental living conditions. These hostile living conditions in particular are associated with institutional and daily social racism that when experienced over a lifetime is contributory to chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, obesity, and diabetes¹, as well as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse². Latino/as experience unique barriers such as lack of Spanish-speaking clinicians and reluctance to seek medical treatment due to immigration-related fears.

Although no one can bring back our COVID-19 victims, please let this tragedy inspire the Federal Government to fix our inadequate healthcare system and institutional forces that contribute to these healthcare disparities. Improving access to healthcare for all Americans, implementing national policies to improve the education and economic conditions for all Americans, and partnering with scientific organizations such as the American Psychological Association to reduce racism and healthcare disparities³ are a few of our recommendations.

Asian-Americans have also unfairly suffered in the pandemic, as they have been targeted as the cause of COVID-19. Xenophobic acts towards Asians, recalling discrimination against Chinese railroad workers in the 1800's and the internment of Japanese-Americans during the 1900's, have again reared its ugly head in the 2000's. Advocacy groups have reported over 600 hate incidents against Asian-Americans across the country during the past week⁴. Such acts induce fear in innocent Americans, are emotionally toxic, and unpatriotic. We implore that the highest levels of the United States Government support its Asian citizenry by eliminating divisive rhetoric towards Asians, publicly denouncing these acts, encouraging acceptance and tolerance of fellow Americans, educating the public on the negative impact of overt and covert racism for the victims and society, and prosecuting racism-based criminal acts against Asian Americans as hate crimes which have no place in American society. These interventions should be implemented until these racist acts are eliminated. A singular statement of support is not enough as these heinous acts continue.

We sincerely thank you for your efforts and the long hours you are working to ensure our safety and well-being. We are prepared and willing to assist you in anything you may need.

Respectfully,

The Asian Neuropsychological Association

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2. Carter, R. T., Johnson, V. E., Kirkinis, K., Roberson, K., Muchow, C., & Galgay, C. (2019). A meta-analytic review of racial discrimination: relationships to health and culture. *Race and Social Problems*, 11(1), 15-32. <file:///C:/Users/Daryl/Documents/all%20of%20apas%20stuff/ANA/COVID-19/carter%20Meta-Analytic-Review-of-Racial-Discrimination-Relationships-to-Health-and-Culture%202019.pdf>
3. Tucker, C. M., Kang, S., & Williams, J. L. (2019). Translational research to reduce health disparities and promote health equity, *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, 5(4), 297-301. <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2019-77891-001.pdf>
4. Phillips, K. (2020). They look at me and think I'm some kind of virus: What it's like to be Asian during the Coronavirus pandemic. *USA Today*. Retrieved on April 11, 2020 from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/03/28/coronavirus-racism-asian-americans-report-fear-harassment-violence/2903745001/>