How Black Families Should Deal With the Health Care System Transcript

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Healthcare Inequality and Medical Mistrust

Dr. Michael Norah, I want to talk to you about what black families need to know when they enter the healthcare system, which is often unequal, unjust.

Our history with the American medical system is complicated and often painful. For generations, blackfamilies have navigated a system that was not built for us.

We carry the memory of unethical experiments and the present day reality of unequaled treatment. It is not just in your head. Studies and countless personal stories confirm that black patients often receive a different standard of care.

Our pain is dismissed more frequently, our concerns are sometimes overlooked. This history creates a deep, understandable mistrust that can make even a routine doctor's visit feel stressful and overwhelming.

Acknowledging this truth is the first step toward empowerment. this is not a story of the past, it is a reality many of us face today on January 13th, 2026. When we walk into a clinic or an emergency room, we often carry an extra burden.

We worry if our symptoms will be taken seriously or if we will become another statistic. This mental weight is heavy and it can prevent us from seeking the care we desperately need.

we might delay appointments or hesitate to speak up, fearing judgment or dismissal. Understanding this shared experience is crucial. It connects us and validates our feelings, reminding us that we are not alone in this struggle for fair and just medical treatment.

The statistics are stark and tell a story we know all too well in our communities. Black mothers face tragically high rates of maternal mortality.

Understanding Disparities and Systemic Bias

Black patients are less likely to receive adequate pain management compared to white patients with the same complaints. These disparities are not due to biology.

They are the direct result of systemic racism and implicit bias within the healthcare profession. these biases can be unconscious, but their impact on our health is very real and very dangerous.

We must confront this reality head on, not to be discouraged. but to be prepared. Knowing this history and the current landscape is not about fear. It is about knowledge.

Knowledge is power. When we understand the challenges, we can build strategies to overcome them. We can learn how to navigate these spaces with confidence and demand the respect and care we are entitled to.

This is not just about our individual health, it is about changing the system for our children and for generations to come. We are standing on the shoulders of ancestors who fought for their very survival and we can honor them by fighting for out well-being today.

You are the chief executive officer, the CEO of your own body. No one knows your body better than you do. This mindset is your greatest tool. Before you ever step into a doctor's office, your preparation begins.

Start by keeping a simple health journal or a log on your phone.

Preparing for a Doctor Visit

Write down your symptoms every day. What does the pain feel like? Is it sharp, dull, or aching? What time of day is it worse? what makes it better or worse.

this detailed record is powerful evidence that cannot be easily dismissed. it turns your feelings into facts. Next, make a complete list of every single thing you take.

This includes prescription medications, over-the-counter drugs like pain relievers or allergy pills, and any vitamins or herbal supplements. Write down the name of each one, the dosage, And how often you Take it.

this information is critical for your doctor to understand your full health picture and avoid dangerous drug interactions. Don't assume your Doctor will already have this list or that it's not important.

Your thoroughness protects you and helps your doctor make the safest, most effective decisions for your care. Now think about what you want to get out of this visit.

Write down your questions ahead of time. No question is too small or too silly. Are you worried about a side effect? Do you wanna know about other treatment options?

Are concerned about how a condition might affect your work, or family, life? Having your questions written down ensures you won't forget them in the moment.

It also signals to your doctor that you are an engaged and serious partner in your own healthcare journey, which can shift the dynamic of the entire appointment.

Finally, gather any relevant medical records you might have, especially if you're seeing a new doctor. This could include recent lab results, imaging reports, or notes from a specialist.

Having you own copies empowers you and ensures continuity of care. This preparation transforms you from a passive patient into an active informed advocate for your own health.

It is your right to be heard and being prepared is the best way to make sure your voice is clear, strong and impossible to ignore. This is you taking charge.

Choosing the Right Doctor and Advocating in the Room

Finding the right doctor is like building your personal support team. You deserve a provider who sees you, hears you and respects your culture. Don't be afraid to do your research.

Look for doctors who are committed to health equity. Hospital websites sometimes highlight their diversity and inclusion initiatives. Patient review sites can also offer clues, though you should read them carefully.

Looking for comments that mention a doctor's listening skills, respect and willingness to answer questions. Word of mouth recommendations from trusted friends, family or community groups can be incredibly valuable in finding culturally sensitive providers.

Once you are in the appointment, remember that you have the right to clarity. Medical language can get confusing and intimidating. It is okay to say, can you explain that to me in simpler terms, or I don't understand what that means.

Could you draw a picture or break it down for me? A good doctor will welcome these questions and take the time to ensure you understand your diagnosis and treatment plan.

Your understanding is essential for your health. You need to know what is happening with your body and what the

next steps are. In plain language. One of the most powerful strategies is to never go to an important appointment alone.

Bring a trusted family member or friend to act as your advocate and second set of ears. This person can help you remember your questions, take notes on what the doctor says, and provide emotional support.

Their presence can also change the dynamic in the room, making it less likely that your concerns will be brushed aside. They are your witness and your backup, Making sure the focus stays on your health and wellbeing.

But what if you feel your symptoms are being ignored? This is the moment to be firm and persistent. You can say, I appreciate your opinion, but I know my body and I Know something is wrong.

What are the next steps to investigate this further? Or what else could be causing these symptoms?

Speaking Up, Seeking Second Opinions, and Family Legacy

I would like to rule out other possibilities. If you are still not being heard, you have the right to ask for a second opinion or to Be referred to a specialist.

Do not leave the office feeling dismissed. Your health is on the line and your advocacy is your best defense. The work you do today to take charge of your health is not just for you, it is a powerful lesson for your children and your entire family.

When they see you preparing for appointments, asking bold questions and demanding respect, you are teaching them how to be their own advocates. You are breaking a cycle of medical mistrust and passivity.

You are showing them that their health matters and that there voices deserve to be heard. This is how we build a legacy of empowerment that will protect our loved ones for generations to come.

this journey of advocacy is an act of love for yourself and your community. It can be tiring and sometimes it may feel like an uphill battle, but every time you speak up you make it a little bit easier for the next black patient who walks into that same clinic.

You are contributing to a slow but steady shift in the culture of medicine. Your preparation and your courage create ripples of change. You're not just a patient, you're a pioneer, paving the way for a more just and equitable healthcare system for all of us.

Remember that you are not in this alone, we are a community, and our collective strength is immense. Share your experiences, both good and bad, with your friends and family.

share tips, recommend doctors who listen, and support each other through health challenges. By building this network of knowledge and supports, we reinforce our power and resilience.

We create a safety net built on shared wisdom and mutual care. This connection is a vital part of our well-being, strengthening our resolve and reminding us of the shared goal.

So, take a deep breath, gather your notes, call your trusted friend, Walk into that doctor's office with your head held high, knowing you are prepared, you're powerful, and you the CEO of your health, your life and the health of the family are worth fighting for.

By taking these steps, You are not only protecting your body but also honoring your history and building a healthier more empowered future. Your health is your wealth, a precious inheritance you will pass down.

Guard it fiercely.