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Welcome to the WOEMA WINDOW. This e-newsletter is sent to members by email on a monthly basis. The e-newsletter provides links to this page. Below are the items that appeared in the February 2021 issue.

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No events

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## President Welcoming Remarks

*By Scott A. Krasner, MD, MPH, FACOEM*

I'd like to wish everyone a very Happy New Year! As WOEMA's President for 2021, I know I have my work cut out for me. We have just experienced one of the worst pandemic the world has ever seen and are still in the midst of its devastation. So how do I lead with all the uncertainty for the coming year?

I am reminded of all those who came before me, and see that leadership is not determined by any one person, but rather the collective talent of its members. It is with this notion that I stand humbly and am honored to take on this challenge.

We have much to do, and I am quite optimistic that we will not only get through this pandemic but WOEMA will be at the vanguard and in the forefront leading this fight. My goals for the upcoming year is that of renewal and rededication: First to WOEMA itself, we are reviewing our bylaws, policies, and procedures, to make our organization more accessible to its members. Second, to our members, we will continue to encourage to interact and inspire participation and growth. And finally, to our annual WOHC conference, we will continue to provide the highest quality conference for which our reputation has been known.

It is truly an honor for me to be your President. So, my New Year's wish for you is to get involved, participate, let your talent shine as a tribute to those who came before us and as an inspiration to those who will follow. I wish you well and am looking forward to a great and exciting New Year for WOEMA.

## JEDI Committee Update

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be a force of nature that has wreaked havoc worldwide affecting all areas of our society. It also managed to effectively shed a scathing light on the underlying healthcare disparities which primarily affect underrepresented minorities. The [mortality rates](#) from COVID-19 are more than twice as high in underrepresented populations such as in Black, Latinx, and Indigenous populations when compared to White populations. Many of our patients are essential workers which in itself, has put them at higher risk for infection among other equity issues such as healthcare access. Though the underlying reasons for these disproportionate rates continue to be investigated, structural and systemic racism are linked to these social determinants of health.

President Biden created the White House COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force led by [Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith](#). She is an associate professor of internal medicine, public health and management and the associate for health equity research, director of the Center for Community Engagement and Health Equity, and the founding director of the Equity Research and Innovation Center (ERIC) at Yale School of Medicine. The task force goals are to address, mitigate, and prevent health inequities in underrepresented groups.

The [executive order](#) addressing health equity issues as it relates to the pandemic signed on January 21, 2021, states "Addressing this devastating toll is both a moral imperative and pragmatic policy. It is impossible to change the course of the pandemic without tackling it in the hardest-hit communities. In order to identify and eliminate health and social inequities resulting in disproportionately higher rates of exposure, illness, and death, I am directing a Government-wide effort to address health equity. The Federal Government must take swift action to prevent and remedy differences in COVID-19 care and outcomes within communities of color and other underserved populations."

This large scale response is set to tackle this deeply rooted systemic issue from multiple fronts. For example, there still remains limited data in many states in regards to race, ethnicity, and other demographics. Policies will be difficult to implement if we do not have the data. Equitable access to vaccines, testing, treatment, and PPE are another area of need which is to be addressed by the current administration. Education and access to accurate information to at-risk groups will be vital. Can workers get the time off from work to get their vaccine? There also remains a transportation challenge for many with limited distribution sites. These are only some of the hurdles that are in the way and will need to be addressed by the current administration.

COVID-19 statistics clearly demonstrate that this pandemic will not end until we address the inequities starkly laid bare by the novel coronavirus. February is Black History Month and while we reflect on the importance of this month in the middle of a pandemic, it would be incumbent for us to also reflect on the ramifications of this pandemic in the Black population. As occupational medicine specialists, many of our patients and the employees we care for have been disproportionately affected in this pandemic. With the advent of the vaccine and policies in place to address the structural issues at hand, we will all need to work towards closing the gaps for populations disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

## **WOEMA Website Resources**

*Check out this valuable content on the WOEMA Website!*

If you haven't reviewed the site in a while go to [Woema.org](http://Woema.org) for Latest News, Resources, Career Center, Legislative Updates & Education. Follow the news on the 2021 WOHC In Person Conference in Phoenix, AZ.

Set up your profile to ensure you are getting the latest announcements and opt in to receive emails. Look at the "About" drop down tab and think about participating on a committee!

Coming Soon! A Members Only Community Forum to interact and communicate. Post questions and answers, clinical updates, follow legislation and regulatory issues, see what committees are doing, latest news and more.

### **Webinars**

#### **Understanding and Preventing Racism in Healthcare, a two-part series**

**February 25, 2021, and March 11, 2021, 12 pm - 1 pm\* pacific time**

The WOEMA Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee presents two nationally recognized experts in systemic racism and implicit bias in the healthcare workforce. Learners will start to develop an awareness and understanding of their own biases when caring for patients that will enable recognition of the learner's own intrinsic biases and the tools available to mitigate them.

#### **Feb 25: An Anti-Racist Imperative for Clinical Practice: On Racism, Health, and Clinical Responsibility**

**Dr. Rhea Boyd**, a pediatrician at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland, California, will present on racial injustice and its effects on health equity. We will explore the connections between racism and health outcomes and the role of physicians in addressing racism.

**March 11\*: Structural Racism and the Practicing Physician: What to Recognize, What to Change.**

**Dr. Danielle Hairston**, Director of Residency Training in the Department of Psychiatry Howard University College of Medicine Washington DC, will discuss understanding implicit bias in patient care and provide evidence-based instruction and tools for clinicians to overcome them. We will discuss understanding implicit bias in patient care and provide evidence-based instruction and tools for clinicians to overcome them.

*\*We recognize that this webinar series will generate thoughts and questions. We invite you to share and join us for 30-minute moderated breakout discussion groups immediately following the presentation by Dr. Hairston on March 11.*

[Learn more and register](#)

**WOEMA's Podcast Channel: Listen - Subscribe – Share****Recent episodes include:**

**NEW!** Workplace COVID-19 Outbreaks

The COVID-19 Vaccine - What we Need to Know

COVID Pulmonology: What we Know Now

Listen and subscribe to episodes directly on [WOEMA's Podcast Channel](#) or your favorite podcast platform. The series is available on iTunes, Amazon Music, iHeart Radio, Pandora, Spotify, and others. Access all platforms directly from [WOEMA's Podcast Channel](#).



## Legislative Update

*COVID is the focus for WOEMA's Legislative Committee*

WOEMA's Legislative Committee serves a useful venue these days for the circulation of news and the latest intelligence around the medical response to COVID-19. The discussion is guided by the central question of how WOEMA and OEM physicians can help workers and employers get or stay well and reduce the risk of spread of disease. Among other efforts, the conversation prompted the development of **Workplace COVID-19 Outbreaks: Suggested Actions by Employers and Workers' Compensation Carriers**, a spectral effort led by Paul Papanek, MD, that recommends steps to take and resources to consult when COVID strikes the workplace.

Chang Na, MD, an Occ Med physician with Kaiser Southern California in Bakersfield, chairs the committee this year, and members should feel free to drop in on the weekly Zoom call, which starts at 7:30 a.m.

COVID of course is also very much a focus of state legislatures this year, which have all launched their sessions with various restrictions on bill volume, in-person hearings and meetings, and/or access to Capitol buildings. In California, COVID-related legislative proposals are starting to pile in, with bills that range from rent relief, to loosening re-opening requirements for amusement parks, to reimbursing medical offices for all purchases of PPE.

In the area of Workers' Compensation, SB 213 (Cortese) is a new and problematic bill that would extend the presumption of work-relatedness of infectious and respiratory diseases, cancer, musculoskeletal injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder to all hospital workers engaged in direct care. As a matter of principle, WOEMA opposes all presumptions based on their non-scientific nature and distorting effects on the system. Our committee has invited the author, Senator Dave Cortese (D-Santa Clara) to speak with us about the bill, and also his new role as chair of the Senate Labor Committee, the main source of and chief venue for Work Comp policymaking in Sacramento. Unfortunately, other presumption expansions have also been introduced including AB 334 (Mullin) re. lifeguards and skin cancer, and SB 284 (Stern) re. public safety officers and PTSD. They and others will all get heard in the Senate Labor Committee, we want to communicate with the Senator about why presumptions in general almost always a wrong idea.

Other Work Comp bills the committee will review include AB 399 (Salas), which would make changes to the Independent Review process, and AB 404 (Salas), which would allow the new fee schedule for QMEs to adjust for inflation. Other bills of interest include AB 40 (Hurtado), which would create a pipeline for community college students to enter pre-med. WOEMA supported a similar proposal last year. Also anticipated is legislation sponsored by the California Medical Association that would relocate the administration of the CURES database from the Dept. of Justice to the Dept. of Public Health.

*Those wishing to track legislation and WOEMA positions and communications on bills can access via this self-updating [web report](#), which can also be found on the WOEMA website.*

## WOHC 2021

*Annual Western Occupational Health Conference*

Been missing anything lately? Looking for that special something? We, your WOHC planners have the answer. Come join us for a fantastic Phoenix conference Sept 29-October 2. Come see your old friends. Come meet your new ones. Join us. You know you want to! Stay tuned as the curtain rises like that the beautiful Phoenix bird to reveal some enticing topics coming your way.



## WOEMA Guidance

*Announcement for WOEMA Guidance on Workplace COVID-19 Outbreaks*

The Western Occupational and Environmental Medical Association is pleased to announce the publication of "Workplace COVID-19 Outbreaks: Suggested Actions by Employers and Workers' Compensation Carriers" – a new and detailed set of recommendations designed to assist employers in controlling COVID-19 in workplaces.

[Workplace COVID-19 Outbreaks: Suggested Actions by Employers and Workers' Compensation Carriers](#)

WOEMA is a regional component of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) and is dedicated to high-quality medical care and ethical principles governing the practice of occupational medicine.

**Administrative Office** *(Please use for all Accounting, Payments, and Invoices)*

224 West State Street

Trenton, NJ 08608

**Local Office**

PHONE: (415) 764-4918

FAX: (415) 764-4915

Petaluma, CA

EMAIL: [woema@woema.org](mailto:woema@woema.org)

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