

*In 1847, Dr. James McCune Smith was withheld Academy Fellowship simply because of his race. As the first university-trained African American physician in the United States, Dr. McCune Smith served and saved countless New York City residents as a pharmacist, and as the staff physician—and later the medical director—of the Colored Orphans Asylum. Despite his invaluable contributions to health, the Academy leadership turned away from including him among its distinguished community of medical professionals. This past year has been one of reflection at the Academy, which is why it was our honor to award a posthumous Fellowship to Dr. McCune Smith at our 171<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Discourse & Awards. While this recognition cannot change our past, it will undoubtedly help define our values going forward, as we will not shy away from doing what is right, and we will strive for equity and justice.*

In 2018, despite remarkable advancements in healthcare, disparities in health outcomes have never felt greater and, at times, making progress feels like an uphill battle. It requires investment of dollars, collaboration among leaders in health and medicine, and strong community partnerships, all working in unison to change the structures and systems that keep so many people from achieving optimal health. We at The New York Academy of Medicine are committed to ensuring that every person—regardless of race or socioeconomic status—has what they need, when they need it, in order to be healthy. We are addressing the complex social determinants of health and achieving progress toward health equity through research and evaluation, informing policy, community partnerships, and public engagement.

[Join us in our effort to help every person live their healthiest life.](#)

We will not tolerate that poor New Yorkers have a 30% higher mortality rate than wealthier ones because of the social determinants that affect health. That is why **we hosted the Advocacy in Medicine Conference, where medical students learned to advocate for their patients using principles of social justice.** Until this kind of leadership training is built into the curricula of all health professions, our role in preparing young scholars remains crucial.

Our work toward health equity continues in our own community of East Harlem, where 31% of residents and 50% of children live in poverty. **We have secured over \$178 million in new City funding across housing, transportation, public space, community services, and culture** through partnerships with community networks and coalitions. Here, where access to fresh produce, safe places to play and exercise, culturally competent health care, affordable housing, and health promoting resources are limited, this funding will improve lives for years to come.

We continue to convene the great minds of our time to discuss the past, present, and future of health for the benefit of our community. In this year alone, **the Academy hosted over 45 public programs that inspired, educated, and engaged diverse public audiences**, including “America’s Doctor,” an intimate conversation with former U.S. Surgeons General Drs. Antonia Novello, Joycelyn Elders, David Satcher, and Richard Carmona about what it takes to ensure the health of a nation.

We believe that everyone should have access to the amazing resources within our walls, which is why the Academy Library continues to be open to the public. This year, **we led 91 tours and taught 21 classes that connected people to the history and current landscape of medicine and public health, and over 100 scholars used the Academy Library for research publications.**

We have made great strides in eliminating barriers to good health, but there is so much more work to do. In New York City, black women are over three times more likely than white women to die in childbirth, and infant mortality is also on the rise. That is why in February, **the Academy hosted a Summit on Maternal Mortality aimed at highlighting current efforts to reduce persistent racial disparities that impact maternal mortality** and advance health equity for all women through policy and program strategies.

By providing evidence-based guidance, we shape policies that save lives. We are currently using data to promote health equity for aging New Yorkers who deserve to grow older with dignity. The Academy launched **IMAGE: NYC, an interactive map of New York City's age-friendly services that will inform more equitable distribution of resources for older people across the City.**

**[We can advance health equity for all. Will you commit to fighting inequalities with us?](#)**

With your support, we will push even harder for health equity in 2019. We will lead a statewide learning collaborative to advance health and aging across all policies; launch a public programming series on race and health to delve into the historical, structural and cultural barriers to health equity; develop an action collaborative on child health led with East Harlem residents and frontline workers from local community organizations; and continue to nurture the next generation of health professionals through mentorship and internship opportunities.

All of this, and more, is what your investment can make possible as we work to advance health equity. **[Become our partner in creating a world where everyone gets what they need, when they need it, in order to live a healthy life.](#)**

With thanks,



Judith A. Salerno, MD, MS  
President

P.S. You can make your year-end gift go twice or three times as far. Many employers match donations by their employees to our organization.

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For assistance, contact Ahmed Elbordiny at **[aelbordiny@nyam.org](mailto:aelbordiny@nyam.org)** or (212).822.7209.