

Diversity efforts drive rise in female and minority medical school students

December 4 2018



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Medical schools in the United States are accepting more women and minority students a decade after diversity standards were introduced by a national accrediting body. According to Yale researchers, the standards are associated with an increase in both the number and proportion of applicants from underrepresented groups, suggesting that the pool of

minority talent is sufficient to boost diversity.

The study was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Disparities in the physician workforce have long existed, and the proportion of female and African American [medical school](#) students appeared to be declining a decade ago. In 2009, the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), which accredits [education programs](#) in U.S. medical schools, introduced two standards designed to increase diversity among qualified applicants. These standards mandated all medical-degree-granting institutions to develop a mission-appropriate diversity policy, and maintain ongoing systematic recruitment and retention activities to achieve diversity outcomes.

To evaluate the impact of the standards on diversity, the research team gathered data on the sex, race, and ethnicity of matriculants at all accredited medical schools. They analyzed the data at different time intervals between 2002 and 2017.

The [research team](#) found that in the years after the LCME standards were introduced, the percentage of female, black, and Hispanic medical school matriculants increased, with the largest gains for women.

Over time, both the proportion and raw number of women and minorities increased, said lead author Dowin Boatright, assistant professor of emergency medicine. This finding, he said, suggests that rather than remaining fixed, the pipeline of prospective female and [minority students](#) rose during the period studied.

"The standards do make a difference," he noted. "It is a tool that diversity advocates didn't have before to implement diversity programs."

Examples of such programs include specialized high schools that expose disadvantaged students to math and sciences, as well as programs that accept students to both undergraduate and medical school at the same time. "The next step in research is to determine how individual schools are approaching the challenge of increasing diversity, and identifying best practices," he said.

More information: *Journal of the American Medical Association* (2018). [jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/ ... 1001/jama.2018.13705](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/...1001/jama.2018.13705)

Provided by Yale University

Citation: Diversity efforts drive rise in female and minority medical school students (2018, December 4) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-12-diversity-efforts-female-minority-medical.html>

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