Chair’s corner: Last year, a resident/faculty committee began work to promote diversity across our Department. Their early programs included an introductory plenary at last spring’s faculty retreat, a series of resident workshops on racism and unconscious bias, and a pilot program to enhance the recruitment of residents from racial and ethnic groups who are underrepresented in medicine. I’ve been deeply moved as I’ve listened to our residents and faculty of color share their experiences of living and working within our community.

It’s time to extend these activities to all of our faculty. It will require work at several levels, from enhanced awareness to new recruitment strategies:

- During the 2017-18 academic year, we will conduct a faculty development curriculum devoted to raising awareness of these critical topics. There will be two basic and two more advanced sessions.

  We will be asking each faculty member to commit to attend one three-hour session. Information regarding the topics to be covered, and signup information, will be available shortly. They will be held on:

  Tuesday, November 14, 2017  3:30-6:30
  Thursday, January 9, 2018     3:30-6:30
  Thursday, March 1, 2018    7:30-10:30
  Tuesday, June 5, 2018        7:30-10:30

- We will also build on the success of our pilot work devoted to resident recruitment, and will find ways to extend this work into the recruitment of faculty underrepresented in medicine.

These initiatives are overdue. They were influenced by the national conversation about the influence of racism and unconscious bias. Last year, we were inspired by APHA President and
Family Physician Camara Phyllis Jones, who called for a national campaign against racism in her plenary address at the 2016 Society of Teachers of Family Medicine meeting. This work has continued at subsequent STFM meetings where several of our residents and faculty are emerging as leaders in the national conversation.

We will never achieve our goal of Healthy people, families, and communities - with equal access for all without a workforce that reflects the communities we serve. We won’t recruit a workforce that reflects diversity without changing our approaches to recruitment. We won’t sustain a diversified workforce until we examine critical questions about our own culture and unconscious biases.

There are things for all of us to learn about undoing the impact of racism. While it won’t always be easy and it may not be comfortable, it will be a unique learning opportunity for all of us. I’ve been surprised and I’ve been inspired. Moving forward, this work will require a commitment by all to support environments for discussions of difficult issues for everyone, particularly for our students and residents and faculty of color who experience racism on a regular basis both personally and professionally.

Dan Lasser