

NPA Position Statement: Black Lives Matter

Jerasimos Ballas, MD, MPH, Viveka Prakash-Zawisza, MD, MS, MBA

The National Perinatal Association (NPA) is an interdisciplinary organization that strives to be a leading voice for perinatal care in the United States. Our diverse membership is comprised of healthcare providers, parents & caregivers, educators, and service providers, all driven by their desire to give voice to and support babies and families at risk across the country.

Members of the NPA write a regular peer-reviewed column in Neonatology Today.



Educate. Advocate. Integrate.

As a national organization dedicated to the advocacy and support of vulnerable babies, parents, and families, the National Perinatal Association stands in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. The foundational principles of the movement help to inform NPA's mission and remind us that the work is not done. We pledge to better embody those principles in our own organizational structure and operations and have laid out our action plan in a statement reprinted here, originally released on June 4, 2020.

Viveka Prakash-Zawisza, MD, MS, MBA
President-Elect

Disclosure: The National Perinatal Association www.nationalperinatal.org is a 501c3 organization that provides education and advocacy around issues affecting the health of mothers, babies, and families.

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BLACK LIVES MATTER



To all NPA members,

This is the time to stand together with our Black community and reaffirm our commitment to improving the lives of pregnant patients, their newborns, and their families.

This starts with confronting the systemic racism that pervades our social, political, and medical establishments, as well as the implicit biases we all carry within ourselves.

Our statement aims to not only bring attention to this issue, but to also to shine a light on actions we all can start taking right now to effect positive change.

Be well. Stay safe.

Jerasimos (Jerry) Ballas, MD, MPH
Maternal-Fetal Medicine
President, National Perinatal Association

READ

NPA's
statement:

BLACK LIVES MATTER



To the families of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, the National Perinatal Association speaks their names and grieves with you. To all Black people who suffer under an unjust system devised to perpetuate oppression, we see you.

We hear you. We stand with you.

We are long past the time for simply bearing witness to such injustice.

As an organization devoted to caring for pregnant people, their newborns and their families, NPA is acutely aware of the **gross inequities and disparities** that pervade our society.

Black women die in pregnancy at three times the rate of their white counterparts, even when controlling for education and income.¹ They are 50% more likely to deliver prematurely.²

Their babies are twice as likely to die compared to their peers'.³

Despite every attempt to explain away these disparities through statistical modeling or medical deduction, they stubbornly persist. It is abundantly clear that when researchers cite “race” as a risk factor for poor health outcomes, what they are actually measuring is the **insidious effects of racism**. One needs to look no further than the current pandemic to see how racial inequities along social, medical, and economic fault lines have led to Black communities being disproportionately ravaged by Covid-19.⁴

This evidence alone should be a call to action for healthcare providers throughout the United States to address the rampant systemic racism in our communities and within our medical practices. As an organization, **NPA commits to doing better, to listening more actively, to facing ourselves, and to being anti-racist.**

We all must act now to:

- **Be actively anti-racist.** If we are going to end racism as a society, we first have to confront it in ourselves. Identify implicit biases in ourselves, our colleagues, and our practice and take the necessary and uncomfortable steps to address it.

- **Speak truth to power** that Black lives matter. Do not accept that healthcare professionals should “stay in their lanes” when it comes to social advocacy. In fact, our understanding of the social determinants of health positions us to be leaders in many of these fights.
- **Recognize and address racism – not race - as a risk factor for poor health outcomes.** This deceptively simple change in language is a powerful tool that can radically advance the way we approach the health of our Black communities.
- **Educate ourselves on how to be true allies.** Read. Research. Seek out resources created by Black voices such as [Ibram X. Kendi](#), [Rachel Cargle](#), and [Ijeoma Oluo](#). Don’t ask Black folks in our lives to carry the labor of educating us; take on the labor ourselves.
- **Listen to Black voices** without defending or centering ourselves. Create safe, inclusive medical practices. Fight against unjust legislation and racist policies.

None of these actions will be easy. It’s easier to deny the realities of racism if we haven’t been directly impacted. **Listen, pay attention, and believe the Black experience.** Sit with discomfort and use it to catalyze change. Take actions today to start saving Black lives.

In solidarity,

The National Perinatal Association

References:

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