



# Jesse Brown for Black Lives (JB4BL): Advancing Health Equity for Black Veterans

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## JB4BL Clinical Committee

20 members (and growing): Physicians, Residents, Medical Students, Pharmacists, Social Workers, and Nurses

### Introduction

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 and the uprisings that followed, many in healthcare participated in demonstrations (White Coats for Black Lives) and began to examine the harms caused by racism in healthcare. The Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, which serves more than 60,000 veterans in Chicago and Northwest Indiana and is one of the most integrated VAs in the country, was no exception.

The Jesse Brown for Black Lives (JB4BL) taskforce was formed on June 10, 2020 to bring awareness to, discuss, and address diversity within the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, with the intent to expose and combat racism that negatively impacts Veterans and Staff. JB4BL is made up of five core committees: Clinical, Education, Special Topics - Courageous Conversations, Events and Visibility, and Mentoring.

### Methodology

Participation is voluntary, and recruitment happened either by members inviting friends and colleagues they thought would be interested, or through people seeing a presentation by a JB4BL member and then seeking to join.

Most meetings begin with discussion of a relevant journal article. This helped establish a base of communal knowledge, allowed participants to reach political agreement and understanding, and get to know each other better. It also helped focus the potential work and projects of the group by investigating what was already known or done. The Clinical Committee developed working groups based on the interests and concerns identified by the members of the committee. These projects all focused primarily on improving the clinical care of our Black veterans. We employed a strategy of shared leadership that allowed multiple committee members to head various initiatives and established camaraderie within the group.

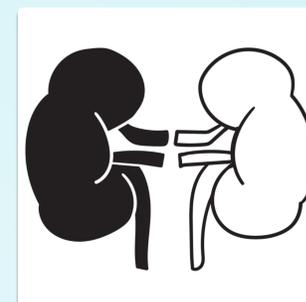
### JB4BL Clinical Committee Projects

Each working group has components focused on Anti-Racism advocacy, quality improvement, and education.

#### eGFR Working Group: A Call to Stop Using Race-Based Algorithms in Kidney Function Calculation

Evidence shows that inclusion of a race coefficient is based on scientifically inaccurate notions that race is a biological construct and harms Black patients.

- Authored a White Paper that was submitted to JBVA leadership with plans to submit regionally and nationally advocating for the removal of the race coefficient when calculating eGFR
- Gave a hospital wide interdisciplinary grand rounds on biological racism and focused on this issue
- Submitted a perspective piece to the Federal Practitioner Journal
- Provided oral and written testimony to the NFK-ASN task force that is evaluating this issue for national guidelines



#### Substance Abuse Working Group

Goal to create an inpatient addiction consult service and create policy that decriminalizes drug use in the healthcare setting.

Members from Internal medicine, psychiatry and addiction medicine, nursing, pharmacy, social work.

Collaboration with law student  
2 Multidisciplinary Grand Rounds:

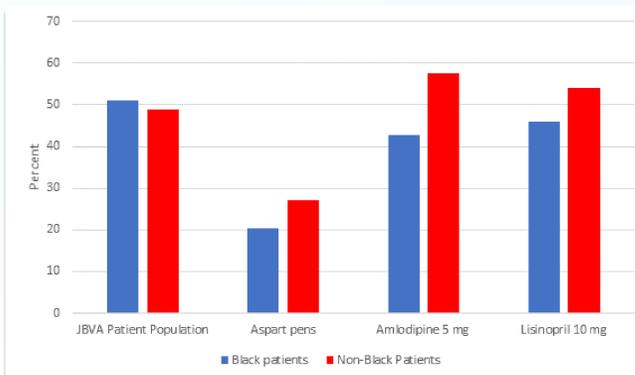
- Multidisciplinary best practices when caring for patients with opioid use disorder on the wards
- Ethical care of patients with substance use disorder



#### Pharmacy Working Group

Analysis of racial prescribing patterns for insulin pens vs. insulin vials and pill splitting

Publication in Jesse Brown VA Pharmacy Newsletter



#### Additional Initiatives

- Staff experiences with racism and how to address this
- Racial Bias in Pulse oximetry project
- Pain control and end-of-life care
- Transportation access

### Results

Several effective working groups have grown out of this process. Each working group has a wide-reaching educational component, which includes Interdisciplinary Grand Rounds and seminars at Jesse Brown VA and our academic affiliates. The educational initiatives are specifically integrated with a plan for advocacy to convince Jesse Brown VA leadership to implement specific actionable items to advance equity and improve the care of Veterans. The educational initiatives and advocacy are mutually reinforcing for committee members. Moreover, as academic clinicians, we can expose learners to the impact of these anti-racist initiatives through direct patient care.

### Conclusion

The JB4BL Clinical Committee uses a collaborative patient-centric approach to identify and improve the negative effects of structural racism in our healthcare facility. We prioritize the role of healthcare providers as political advocates for our Veterans. By implementing a model that focuses on patients' needs, our committee has initiated multiple anti-racist projects over a relatively short time, increased recruitment of dedicated volunteers, and promoted the importance of education as a means for change.

