UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

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"The time is always right to do what is right."
-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Oberlin College Commencement Speech, 1965

To our Healthcare and Health Educator Colleagues:

Our dear friend Dr. Ben Danielson made the painful decision to resign as long-time leader of the Odessa Brown Children's Clinic in response to continued institutionalized racism that he, patients, and staff have experienced as well as a lack of meaningful organizational change.

We are devastated.

This news deeply pains us. As many will attest, Dr. Danielson meant so much to the clinic and the communities it serves. His departure is traumatic. The care he provided and his selfless commitment to the children, their families, and staff are what we should aspire to. This must be acknowledged.

We are saddened.

Dr. Danielson has led the way for a more racially just healthcare system, consistently addressing unfairness and inequality too often overlooked or dismissed. His voice reminds us as healthcare providers, health professional educators, industry leaders, elected officials, and community stakeholders of the need to always advocate for health equity. Deep, authentic commitment and action throughout healthcare and educational systems overall remain deficient, impeding true progress. This must change.

We are outraged.

Racial discrimination is disgraceful and inexcusable. The ongoing prejudices and bigotry in healthcare settings experienced and witnessed by patients, families, and healthcare staff, including Dr. Danielson himself, are shameful. No one is deserving of this treatment and institutional policies and practices are needed to uphold a culture that counters and prevents this hate. This calls for reckoning.

We are disappointed.

Dismantling institutional racism requires institutional response. Organizations must step up and demonstrate accountability to communities of color. We must direct attention and allocate resources to those who are in most need to achieve equity. As Dr. Danielson has pointed out, the moral imperative for healthcare entities to do more on this front is long overdue as people of color must not continue to bear disproportionate burden of illness, injury, and even death. This must be rectified.

We are complicit.

We must reconcile with the truth that our healthcare organizations and institutions exist within the larger context of systemic racism. Dr. Danielson's decision is a clarion call to quicken our pace down the path he has blazed to purposefully and boldly stride toward racial justice and health equity. All of us across the healthcare and public health landscape must examine policies, practices, and norms so that adverse impacts are not inflicted upon those already marginalized. We must pursue transformational changes and strategic mechanisms to assure that disparities are ameliorated so that all can benefit equally. This includes: recruiting and retaining more people of color into the health workforce and its supporting academic institutions; increasing diversity at all levels of organizational leadership; abolishing policing as a first response to conflict; and instilling absolute intolerance for all forms of racial discrimination. This compels repair.

We are committed.

In solidarity, we, at the UW Schools of Nursing, Dentistry, Medicine, Pharmacy, Public Health, and Social Work recognize our need to dismantle our own ways of operating that exclude, isolate, and do harm to students, staff, faculty, and communities of color. While actions are underway, we accept that big tasks and significant effort lay ahead, especially to improve how we educate and how we conduct research. As we endeavor to better our own organization, we offer partnership and collaboration on actions that address the concerns Dr. Danielson has raised. We are determined to prepare nurses, dentists, physicians, pharmacists, public health professionals, and social workers to oppose and disrupt systemic racism. This is our responsibility.

Respectfully,



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