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An Ally for Inclusion

Creating diverse organizations requires participation of people at all levels — especially those who are in power positions.

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Without the advocacy of traditionally empowered groups, disempowered groups cannot succeed.

—Alexander M. Norbash, MD, MS, FACR

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Research in a variety of industries shows that increasing diversity and inclusion in organizations begets a wealth of benefits that go beyond expanding opportunities for underrepresented minorities (URMs). In healthcare, increased diversity and inclusion has been

linked to improved access to care, reduced health disparities, and better health outcomes.¹

Hedvig Hricak, MD, PhD, FACR, chair of the department of radiology at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and past president of RSNA, believes the message is getting through. “Bringing together people with different experiences, points of view, expertise, and skill sets leads to more advanced critical analysis in decision-making, greater innovation, and better overall results,” she says. “Diversity is not just something to pay lip service to — it is truly a key to success.”

Alexander M. Norbash, MD, MS, FACR, associate vice chancellor for diversity, equity, and inclusion at the University of California, San Diego, and co-director of the Radiology Leadership Institute® (RLI) Leadership Summit, agrees. “When you have more perspectives, you have more solutions,” he says.

Norbash prefers the term “inclusion” to “diversity” because it reflects the desire to appreciate every person as an individual within the organization — an increasingly rare and important quality in today’s polarized society, he says. According to Norbash, becoming an inclusive healthcare organization has important implications for employee and physician wellness, as well as quality of care. “When people are appreciated, they are less likely to burn out,” he says. “Inclusion prepares us to mobilize our abilities to be better workers, radiologists, and colleagues.”

Taking an Active Role

Creating inclusive and diverse organizations takes effort and intention, dialogue, and a core group that’s committed to the goal, Norbash says. It requires the active participation of people at all levels of the organization — but especially those who are in leadership and power positions. “Without the advocacy of traditionally empowered groups, disempowered groups cannot succeed,” Norbash says, referring to URM.

Norbash recommends that radiologists find like-minded individuals within the organization and establish a collective commitment. Then, he says, identify leaders within the organization who are also committed to the goal — going as far up the chain of command as possible. “The higher you go, the further you can go,” he says.

As one example, Norbash points to the chancellor of UC San Diego, who participates actively in the university’s efforts to increase diversity. The chancellor’s involvement brings vice chancellors, deans, chairs, and other leadership on board and “moves the conversation about diversity to center stage,” he says.

I believe the most important step is to mentor, teach, and sponsor women and URM as researchers and potential leaders very early on in their careers.

—Hedvig Hricak, MD, PhD, FACR

Making a Difference

According to Hricak, individuals can play a variety of roles in promoting diversity and inclusion in radiology — from introducing young people to the profession to actively promoting the careers of qualified individuals. “I believe the most important step is to mentor, teach, and sponsor women and URM as researchers and potential leaders very early on in their careers,” says Hricak.

Hricak believes that increasing diversity in leadership will be a long process, but she feels encouraged by young and early career

professionals and their comfort in working with people from different backgrounds. Norbash agrees. “You have to be an optimist,” he says. “At the same time, you also have to realize that we have a lot of work to do.”

ENDNOTES

1. Lightfoote JB, Fielding JR, Deville C, Gunderman RB, Morgan GN, Pandharipande PV, Duerinckx AJ, Wynn RB, Macura KJ. Improving diversity, inclusion, and representation in radiology and radiation oncology part 1: why these matter. *J Am Coll Radiol*. 2014;11(7):673–80.
2. Perry RE, Parikh JR. Sponsorship: a proven strategy for promoting career advancement and diversity in radiology. *J Am Coll Radiol*. 2019;16(8):1102–1107.

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