

## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release January 20, 2025

### **Aequitas Health Announces Student Speakers for 2024-25 Annual Conference**

Aequitas Health has selected three outstanding medical student presentations for its 2024-25 Annual Conference, showcasing projects that address critical gaps in healthcare equity. The conference will also feature three distinguished speakers who will explore unconventional clinical pathways to impact health equity.

#### **Selected Presentations:**

##### **FutureCare Directions: Empowering Patient Choices at Anderson Free Clinic**

*Megan McDonald - Medical University of South Carolina*

This project addresses a critical gap in advanced care planning (ACP) for underserved populations. It implements a patient-centered approach to ACP at a free clinic, ensuring patients' voices are heard and healthcare wishes respected. The initiative includes a user-friendly ACP handout, staff training, and a standardized documentation system. By integrating ACP into routine care, it empowers underserved patients to make informed decisions about their care.

##### **The Life Histories Project**

*Avery Ofoje - Medical University of South Carolina*

Building on a successful model from Harvard Medical School, this initiative collects and elevates stories from patients facing systemic healthcare barriers. The project focuses on marginalized patients navigating challenges related to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. By sharing these narratives with care teams, the project helps redirect attention to patients' lived experiences and values in treatment planning.

##### **Impact of Medicaid Expansion and Work Requirements in South Dakota**

*University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine Aequitas Health Chapter*

This timely analysis examines how recent policy changes affect healthcare access in South Dakota, particularly for Native American communities and rural populations. The project evaluates Medicaid enrollment trends from 2020-2023, exploring the effects of COVID-19 policy changes, the state's 2023 Medicaid expansion, and newly implemented work requirements. The research provides valuable insights into how policy decisions impact vulnerable populations' access to care.

### **Distinguished Speakers:**

**Dr. Elizabeth Mack** - VP of Vizient and Professor of Pediatrics at MUSC

**Dr. SreyRam Kuy** - Assistant Professor of Surgery at Baylor and Surgeon at the VA

**Greg Yap** - Partner at Menlo Ventures

These speakers will share their unique experiences and perspectives on how physicians can leverage diverse career paths to advance health equity beyond traditional clinical roles.

“This conference showcases the transformative power of passionate medical students and trailblazing physicians to drive health equity forward,” said Dr. Benson Hsu, President and Chair of Aequitas Health. “By highlighting innovative student projects and unconventional career paths, we aim to inspire the next generation of healthcare leaders. Whether pioneering novel interventions, shaping policy, or leveraging technology, these changemakers demonstrate how we may dismantle disparities and create a more just healthcare system for all. Together, they embody the audacious spirit and unwavering commitment needed to build a future where every patient, regardless of background, receives the exceptional care they deserve.”

The projects and speakers will be featured at the 2024-25 Aequitas Health Annual Conference, held virtually to ensure accessibility for students across all member chapters.

### **About Aequitas Health:**

Aequitas Health is a national medical honor society founded in 2021 that recognizes and supports medical students dedicated to advancing health equity. Through its network of chapters at medical schools across the United States, Aequitas Health fosters future physician leaders committed to eliminating healthcare disparities. The organization supports local initiatives and individual projects through grants, an annual conference, and opportunities to publish in the Aequitas Health Journal.

### **Contact:**

Benson Hsu, MD, MBA, FAAP, FCCM

[Benson.Hsu@aequitashealth.org](mailto:Benson.Hsu@aequitashealth.org)