

Statement by the Leadership of the American Thoracic Society Responding to the Recent Executive Order Mandating How to Address Race and Diversity

On Sept. 22 the President signed an executive order titled “Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping”, which seeks to censor federal agency education efforts to address racial inequality in America. The executive order prevents the discussion of “divisive concepts” such as “race or scapegoating”, “race or sex stereotyping” or that “an individual, by virtue of his or her race or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided further and clear-cut evidence of the impact of longstanding racial and ethnic disparities on respiratory health. These inequities, together with recent public protests, argue for more -not less- education and discussion about race and diversity.

As a medical society of clinicians, scientists, and related health care professionals, we recognize that diversity, not just as related to race, ethnicity, and gender but also to differences in opinions and backgrounds, is essential to scientific advances and progress. The recent actions by the current administration seek to move America backwards in this regard.

Diversity makes us stronger and more successful. The scientific and medical communities have produced innumerable examples of this. This is a fact and not a theory. Our focus now and in the future must be on understanding our history, expanding opportunities for all, and celebrating our diversity. Only then can we reach our fullest potential.

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