

Fear Conference
May 27, 2024

Disparity in Black Women's Reproductive Health.

Dr. Marjorie Dixon

Dr. Marjorie Dixon

Professional Affiliations:



Academic Affiliations:



Recognition:



TIME



Research has documented that social and economic factors, racism, and chronic stress contribute to poor maternal and infant health outcomes, including higher rates of perinatal depression and preterm birth among African American women and higher rates of mortality among Black infants.

Learning objectives

01.

The racial data disparity in infant and maternal care

02.

Some reasons why and places where this disparity occurs.

03.

Improving our breadth and depth of patient data.

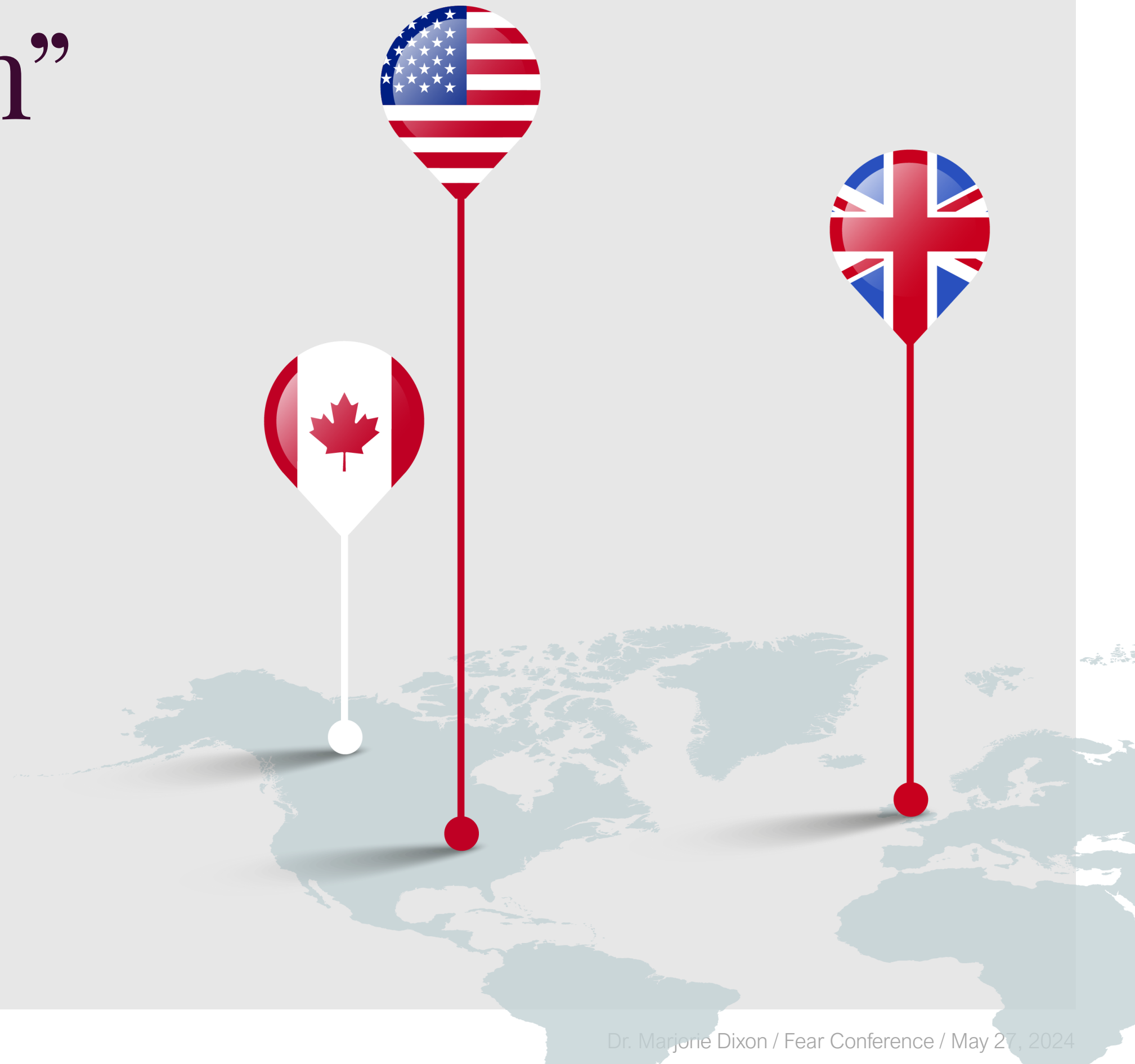
04.

Adopting best practices from other countries.

Data disparity is a “first-world problem”

Most of the best funded healthcare systems rely on a data-driven approach to policies and practices.

But what happens
when that data is incomplete?



Notable efforts to find a fairer data approach

Campaigns in the US and UK work to address the gap that exists in reproductive health of black women.

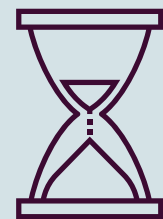
→ We need to do the same here, at home.



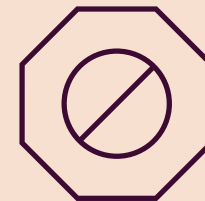
Ethno-racial data saves lives by quantifying the differences



Epigenetics




Weathering



Biases



Society

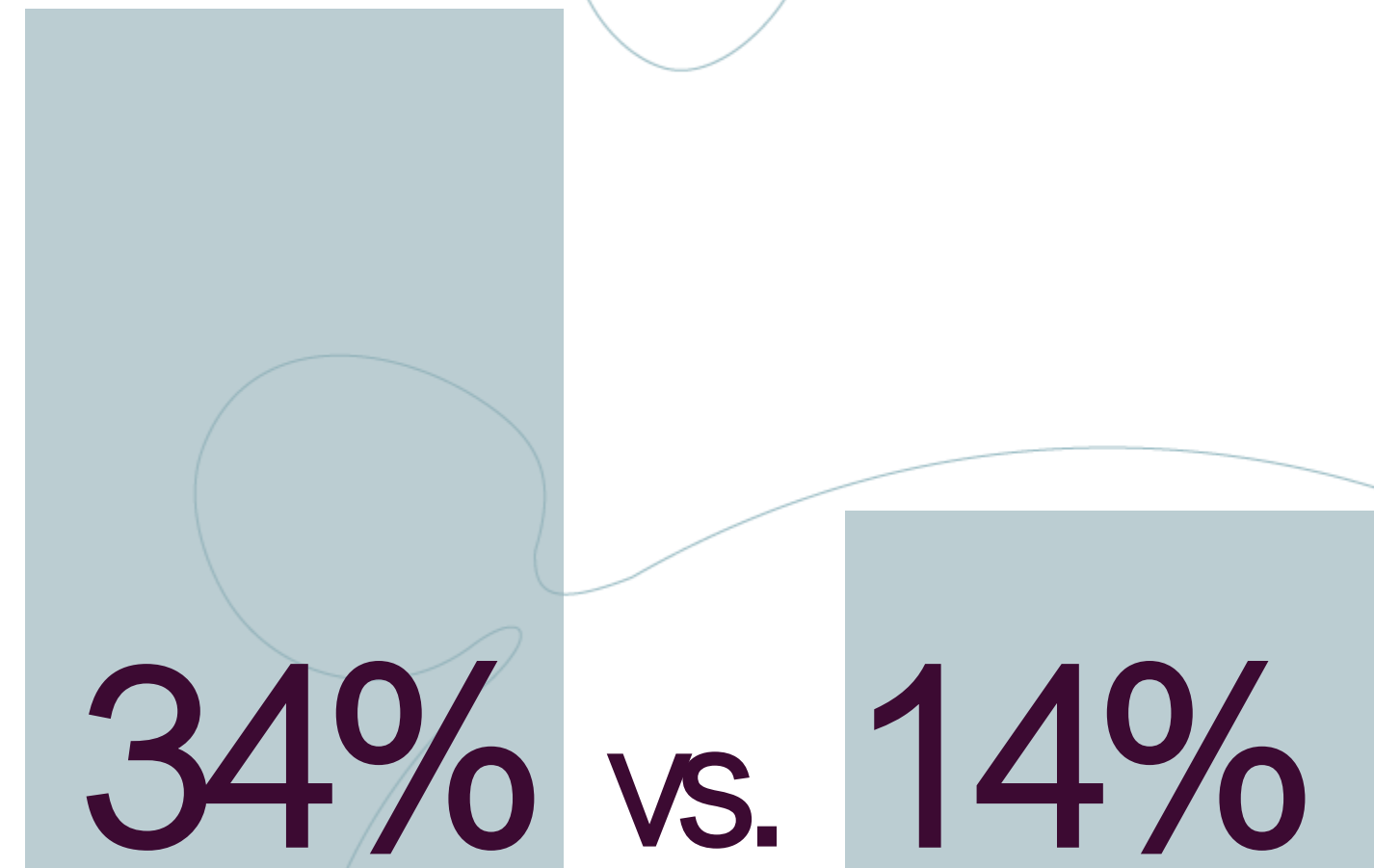
The background of the slide features a repeating pattern of stylized, dark purple silhouettes of people of various ethnicities and ages, facing different directions. The silhouettes are layered, creating a sense of depth and a diverse crowd.

When it comes to maternal
infant and fertility care, the
poorest white woman will fare
better than the most affluent,
well-to-do black woman.

3x

In United States, the maternal mortality risk is almost three times higher in the black community than in the white population.

The numbers speak for themselves



In the black population

In the white population

The invisible barriers to black fertility care

01.

The myth of hyper-fertility

Black women are hyper-fertile and require less fertility care

02.

Lack of trust

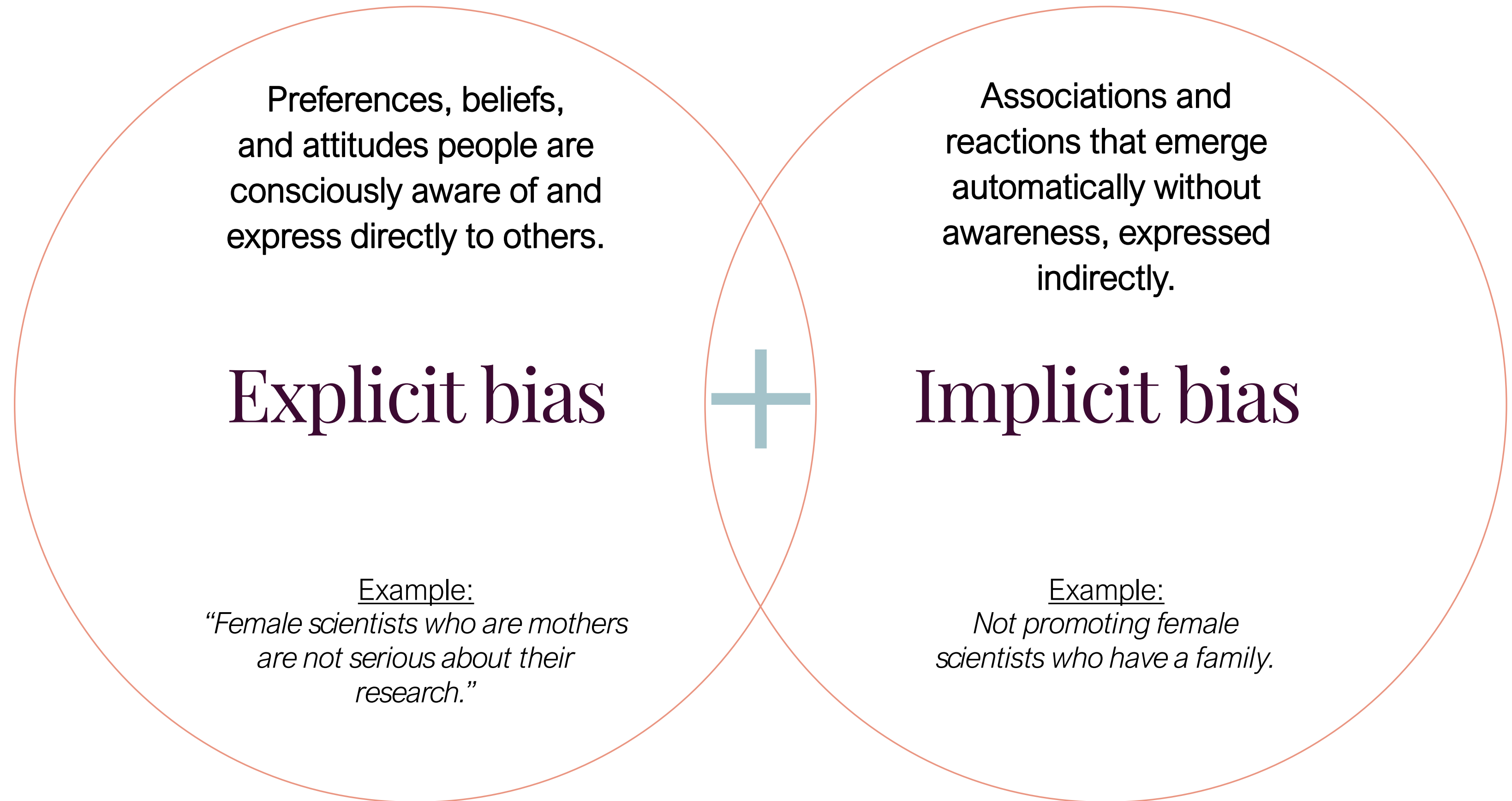
The partners of black women do not want to involve doctors

03.

Gate-keeping

Gate-keeping by primary care doctors and OBGYNs

Why is this happening?



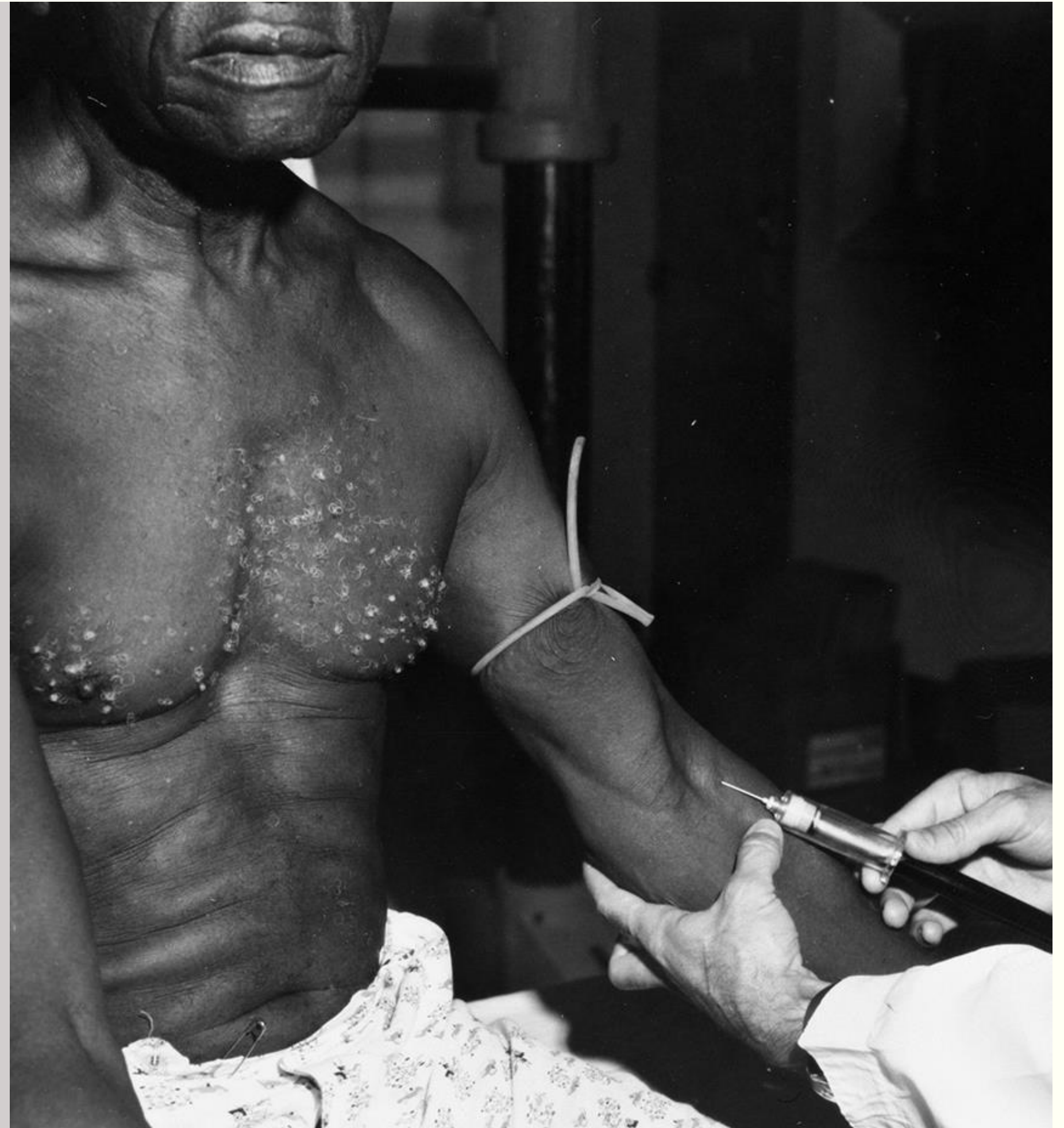
A legacy of brutality

Tuskegee Study, 1932

US Public Health Service engages 600 black men in a long-term study of untreated syphilis without informed consent in exchange for free medical exams, free meals, and burial insurance.

Source:

Public Health Service Study of Untreated Syphilis at Tuskegee and Macon County, AL - Timeline - CDC - OS



A legacy of exploitation

Baltimore, 1951

While she sought treatment for cervical cancer, John Hopkins doctors took cell samples from Henrietta Lacks without her consent, violating her privacy and human rights.

Source:
[The Legacy of Henrietta Lacks | Johns Hopkins Medicine](#)



A legacy we share

Northern Manitoba, 1942

In the aftermath of the depression, Canadian government withholds food to conduct experiments on 1,300 hungry indigenous people, mostly children.

Source:
[Canadian government withheld food from hungry aboriginal kids in 1940s nutritional experiments, researcher finds - The Globe and Mail](#)



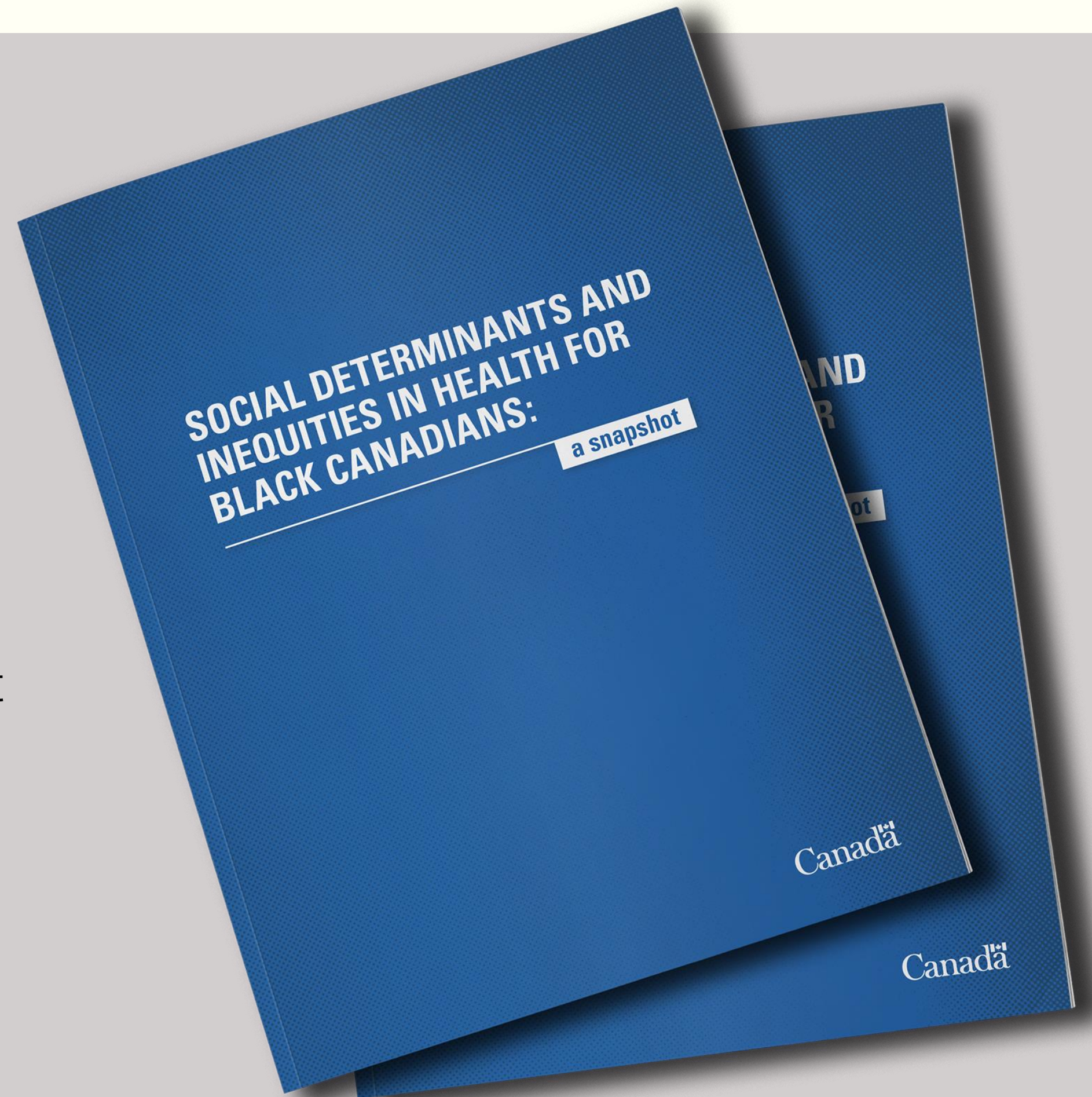
What about now?

Canada, 2024

[Black Canadians face]
“systemic discrimination and under-treatment
in hospitals and other healthcare systems”

“a complete portrait of the health of Black
Canadians does not exist because of
substantial data gaps”

Source:
[Social determinants and inequities in health for Black Canadians: A Snapshot - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/social-determinants-and-inequities-in-health-for-black-canadians-a-snapshot)



Three ways to make Canada the best place to grow a family, *despite your race.*

01.

Robust, race-based
data collection

Catch up to other jurisdictions
and collect robust race-based
data, now.

02.

Substantive
policy changes

Make substantive policy
changes based on honest
and open dialogue.

03.

Stay true
to our values

Show respect, empathy,
and the humility to learn.

What can all healthcare providers do to help?

Acknowledge the challenges and commit to solving them together.

01.

Build a reputation for improving the health of patient populations.

02.

Work to identify, deconstruct, and correct systemic biases & disparities.

03.

Support equitable access to maternal, pregnancy, and fertility care.

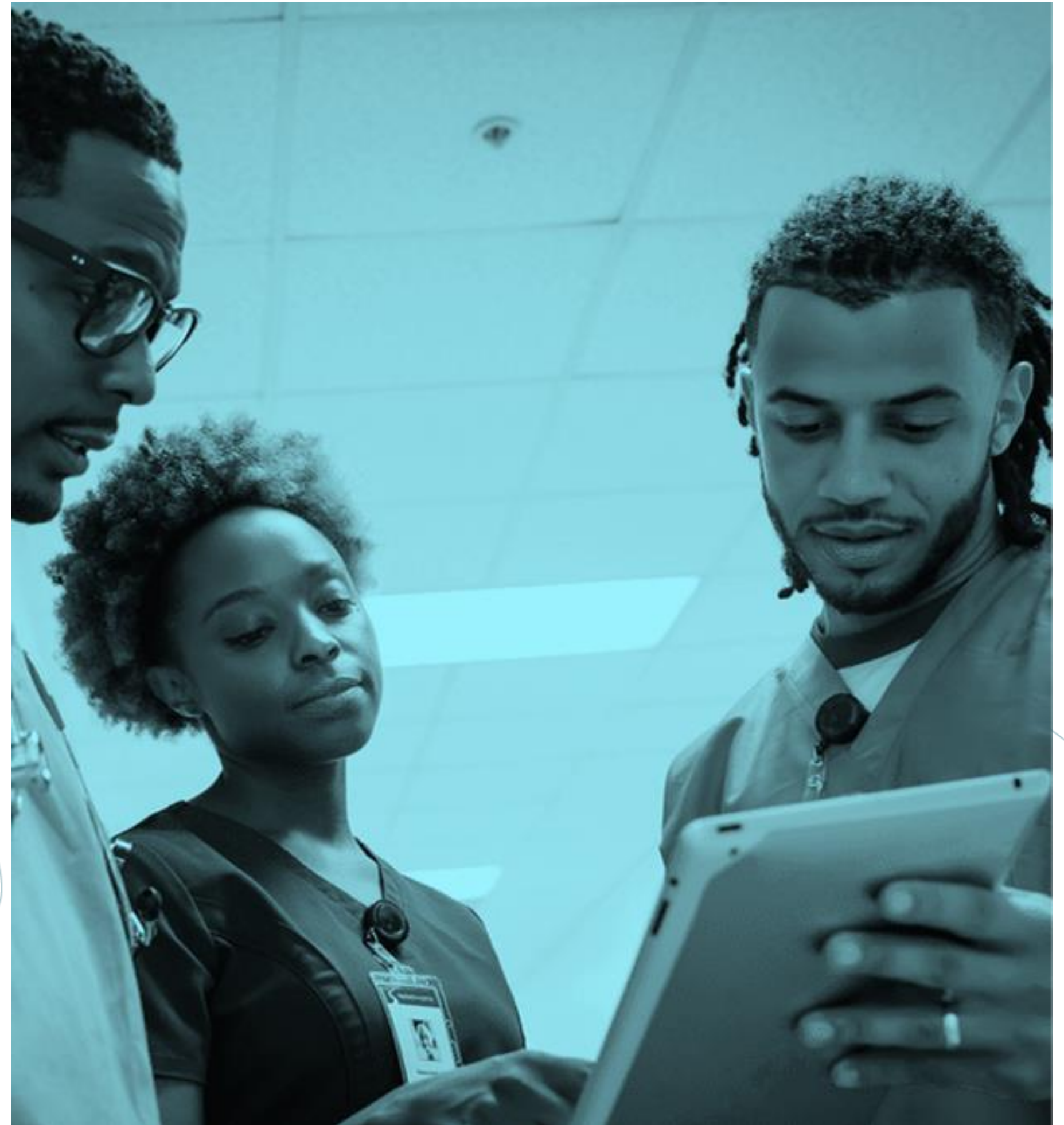
04.

A special role for black healthcare providers

Design and execute a culturally appropriate translation of research for our communities.

Build teams of black

- Researchers
- Clinicians
- Learners
- Leaders
- Community reps



What can we do to improve outcomes for black women's reproductive health?

01.

Work harder to find the data and share it.

02.

Research protocols that include new data sets.

03.

Use the findings to guide and drive policy changes.

04.

Fund corrective changes that level the playing field.

Additional reading, inspiration, and research

Adoption of Medicaid Expansion Is Associated with Lower Maternal Mortality

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1049386720300050>

Racial Disparities in Maternal and Infant Health: Current Status and Efforts to Address Them

<https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-disparities-in-maternal-and-infant-health-current-status-and-efforts-to-address-them/>

White House Blueprint for Addressing the Maternal Health Crisis

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Maternal-Health-Blueprint.pdf>

Separate and unequal: Structural racism and infant mortality in the US

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28363132/>

Sister Song and Reproductive Justice

<https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice>

Health Disparities are a Symptom of Broader Social and Economic Inequities

<https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/health-disparities-symptom-broader-social-economic-inequities/>

Thank you!

Questions for Dr. Dixon?

Anova
FERTILITY

North York

25 Sheppard Ave. W. unit 650 Toronto, ON M2N 6S6

Toronto

40 University Ave., Suite 420 Toronto ON M5J 1T1

Guelph

89 Dawson Road, Suite 113 Guelph, ON N1H 1B1

Waterloo

Medical Centre, 430 The Boardwalk, Suite 402 Waterloo, ON N2T 0C1

[Web](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

[LinkedIn](#)