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**Vermont Medical Society Condemns Police Brutality and  
Pronounces Systemic Racism a Public Health Threat**

**MONTPELIER – June 2, 2020** – The physicians and physician assistants of the Vermont Medical Society (VMS) denounce the recent brutal and senseless acts of violence towards Black people by law enforcement officers and acknowledge the impact systemic racism has in driving adverse health outcomes in our State and across the nation.

VMS President, Catherine Schneider, M.D. and VMS President-Elect, Simha Ravven, M.D., state, “The VMS stands with the Vermont State Police, the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics in Vermont (AAPVT) in denouncing not only police brutality against Black people, but in recognizing that racism and violence against people of color is unacceptable, unwarranted and a detriment to our country. The continued discrimination against people of color has deep lasting health impacts, as well as divisive social impacts. We cannot have a healthy nation if we continue to marginalize and harm any sector of our population.”

There are harmful health impacts of structural racism and racism in law enforcement. The [AMA’s May 29 statement](#) condemning police brutality notes: “Research demonstrates that racially marginalized communities are disproportionately subject to police force... An increased prevalence of police encounters is linked to elevated stress and anxiety levels, along with increased rates of high blood pressure, diabetes and asthma—and fatal complications of those comorbid conditions.”

The Vermont Medical Society supports the [Vermont State Police](#) in condemning police brutality in the death of George Floyd and their commitment to fair and impartial policing, de-escalation, and relationship building in communities of color.

“The civil unrest taking place in America is a call to action to all Americans to address the longstanding racial inequalities facing the Black community,” said [APA CEO and Medical Director Saul Levin, M.D.](#) “Centuries of systemic and institutional racism toward Black Americans has led to decreased access to health care and multiple adverse health outcomes—as recently seen during the COVID-19 pandemic—in addition to anxiety and lower life-expectancy”.

Dr. Rebecca Bell, M.D., President of the American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter said, “Racism is a public health issue and a social determinant of health that creates toxic stress and impacts health. Children will not be able to reach their full potential until we prevent and counteract these experiences for all children--in medicine

and everyday life. The AAPVT Chapter condemns violence, especially when perpetrated by authorities, and calls for a deep examination of how to improve the role of policing. Systemic violence requires systemic response.”

We are watching these tragic events unfold during the COVID-19 global health pandemic, where in Vermont and across the nation, incidence of more severe illness is disproportionately impacting certain racial and ethnic populations and exposing the uneven access to care that leads to disparities in health outcomes. The VMS is committed to addressing bias in health care, as evidenced by our [policy from 2018](#), in which we resolve to support systems designed to combat biases within the health care system and to work to mitigate the unequal treatment of patients and health care professionals.

The VMS grieves for the families of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, and countless others, where race was a determining factor in their interaction with law enforcement and ultimately their untimely deaths. Systemic racism not only destroys the social cohesion of our nation, it also produces devastating health impacts born from trauma, chronic stress and differential access to health care. We as a State and a nation must do better for the health of all.

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About the Vermont Medical Society: The Vermont Medical Society is the leading voice of physicians in the state and is dedicated to advancing the practice of medicine by advocating on behalf of Vermont’s physicians, physician assistants and the patients and communities they care for. The Society serves its 2,400 members through public policy advocacy on the state and federal levels, as well as by providing legal, administrative and educational support, producing a rich flow of news and information and offering member benefits that increase medical practice effectiveness and efficiency. For more information, visit [www.VTMD.org](http://www.VTMD.org).