



EDITORIAL

NPP statement on racism, discrimination, and abuse of power

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Neuropsychopharmacology (NPP) is the official journal of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP). Journal leadership comprises the NPP Senior Editors, the NPP Editorial Board, and the ACNP Publications Committee. Most of us on the NPP team are ACNP members, and all are clinicians and/or scientists actively engaged in the study, treatment, and prevention of neuropsychiatric illness and the suffering it produces.

The ACNP has issued an anti-racism statement (<https://acnp.org/about-us/statement-anti-racism/>), which is reprinted below (*in italics*). As part of the ACNP, the NPP team operates according to these same principles, and rejects racism, discrimination, and abuse of power of any kind. Current events have us watching in horror as overt racism and violence are directed against the Black community—today's example of a cultural legacy that has persisted for centuries. This legacy must finally end and we strive to be part of the community that ends it by being actively anti-racist. We also remain vigilant, acknowledging that hatred takes many forms and is often silent and opportunistic.

Tangible examples of NPP's ongoing efforts to oppose these injustices include:

- Ensuring fairness in all journal processes and intolerance for non-collegial behavior of any kind.
- Promoting diversity, inclusion, and opportunity in all aspects of journal function, including processes intended to increase mindfulness of diversity and inclusion when authors suggest and exclude potential reviewers [1, 2].
- Engaging in analyses that provide insight on journal processes and making the findings broadly available for inspection [1, 2].
- Recognizing that systematic racism represents a public health crisis.
- Highlighting journal content that documents the impact of racism on the brain and mental health, and making relevant articles free for all to read and share [3].
- Being open to any and all ideas to improve our processes or identify areas where we fall short.

In addition, members of the NPP team have pledged to support, financially or otherwise, organizations that are committed to fighting racism. We encourage everyone to work in their daily lives to recognize and address racism in any way they can.

We acknowledge that we have much more to accomplish—as a journal, as an organization, as a field, and as a society—and that we must do better.

ACNP Statement:

“The American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP) is a professional, international organization dedicated to advancing understanding of the brain and the root causes of brain disorders, particularly mental illness. Our belief, supported by the data, is that the scientific community directly and strongly benefits from

diversity in thought, experience, and background. Indeed, our mission statement states that we ‘promote and recognize principles of fairness, equity, and social justice’ in science and society. To that end, we stand with many other scientific and professional organizations in condemning any and all systemic racism and racial disparities. These critical scientific and public health issues require immediate societal attention and policy solutions.

As brain scientists, we are concerned how systemic racism impacts the health of our fellow citizens. As background, our colleagues and members, through decades of research, have demonstrated that:

- *Early life stress, i.e. deprivation of basic needs or threats of bodily harm, psychosocial stress during childhood and adolescence, permanently alters young brains in ways that significantly increase the risk of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and substance abuse.*
- *Very similar effects arise from chronic exposure to unpredictable stress, such as is experienced in communities that are disproportionately subjected to the use of force by authorities, to racial profiling and discrimination, and to policies that historically served to exclude people of color from full economic participation.*
- *Beyond mental disorders, trauma and chronic adversity have long-term negative effects on physical health. They worsen common medical conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes, leading to earlier complications, higher levels of disability, and early/excess mortality.*

In the United States, people of color are disproportionately affected by these stressors. These negative effects are compounded by reduced access to mental health services and health care in general. Moreover, stigma associated with mental health disorders among people of color and their distrust of the medical community may further contribute to a delay in seeking care and/or early discontinuation of treatment. These racial disparities lead to far higher rates of premature death from preventable conditions, in some cases more than twice those of similarly aged white Americans (CDC, 2017). Suicide attempt rates for black teenagers are far higher than those of white teenagers (US HHS Office of Minority Health).

Another core part of ACNP's mission is increasing the diversity of the neuroscience workforce, because a diversity of perspective makes science stronger. We continue to face massive challenges recruiting black youth into science, with loss of promising talent at every stage, from high school through the early faculty career. Those losses can be traced back to biases in the economic, educational, and professional systems that recruit and train scientists. Fighting and ending systemic racism, in all forms, is part of our mission and an essential obligation of all scientists.

Finally, over-policing and other forms of systemic racism towards communities of color harm every American and stain the claim that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are basic rights of all Americans. It is time for change, and the scientific community must be part of that change.”

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