



With Inaugural HELP Conference, Plant-Based Doctors and Community Leaders Take Aim at Health Inequities

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Lifestyle medicine physicians and community leaders of all stripes are coming together later this month for the Health Equity and Lifestyle Project Conference, a brand-new conference that addresses the obstacles that Black Americans face when it comes to health.

The event is the brainchild of two influential plant-based physicians: [Columbus Batiste, M.D.](#), of Healthy Heart Nation and Scott Stoll, M.D., of the Plantrician Project. Batiste says the conference has been in the works for a few years now. “Dr. Stoll and I both shared a passion for creating a conference that would address the state of health in minority communities in a culturally intentional way,” says Batiste.

Speakers will present on a range of topics, exploring different facets of the health crises that impact Black Americans and communities of color at a disproportionate rate, such as Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and infant mortality.

Taking a more holistic approach than the standard medical conference, the HELP conference will bring together not only physicians but also educators, faith-based leaders, hospital administrators, and others positioned to effect change in their communities.

“I think people from [all] sides can benefit from this

blending—that people who are doing work in health equity can learn to apply lifestyle medicine principles to address those health inequities, and those who focus more on lifestyle medicine can connect with those who are doing work in health equity to have maximal benefit for the communities they serve,” says David Bowman, M.D., a plant-based pediatrician and physician. Bowman will lead a presentation on maternal health and infant health on Day 2 of the conference.

Other speakers include Ayesha Sherzai, M.D., and Dean Sherzai, M.D., Ph.D., who will lead a discussion on building resilient communities to help with Alzheimer’s prevention and care, and Kim Williams, M.D., past president of the American College of Cardiology, who will speak on the factors driving higher rates of heart disease in communities of color.

The event features an active format, with 30-minute lectures followed by 45-minute panel discussions. “Day 3, in particular, has me thrilled, as it will focus on exploring the role of the village—including places of faith, higher education, and hospital systems—in improving the health of the community,” says Batiste, who hopes the HELP Conference will become a recurring annual event. Attendees will be provided with plant-based meals throughout the three-day conference.

“The aim of this conference is to equip all the participants with actionable steps to bring about positive change in their community, regardless of whether they are health care professionals or community leaders,” says Batiste. “Our goal is to foster a collaborative environment where attendees can learn from each other’s experiences and contribute to discussions.”

The HELP Conference will take place from March 24 to 26 at the Huntsville Marriott at the Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Health care professionals attending the conference will be eligible to earn Continuing Medical Education credits. Learn more and register for the conference [here](#).