

Healthcare Inequalities

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By TaTyana Wilson

HAMPTON, Va. – The new era of Civil Rights is in healthcare and inequalities, according to Dr. L.D. Britt, Chair of Surgery at Eastern Virginia Medical School. The former President of the American College of Surgeons addressed the many healthcare disparities facing the nation today at the 41st annual Black Family Conference at Hampton University.

"The reason why this is important is because by 2050, America's population will be majority people of color," said Britt.

Britt is working to confront these problems head on and change the healthcare industry. He received a \$2.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to fund his national research into healthcare disparities.

"Forty-five thousand people die every year because they do not have health insurance," said Britt.

Fifty-nine percent of black people live in the top 10 southern states that do not offer the Medicare expansion plan, according to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

In addition to living in areas that do not offer Medicare, individuals of color are more likely to be working in low-wage jobs and industries that do not offer health coverage, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

There is a direct correlation between the lack of health insurance and life expectancy.

There is a 20-year difference in life expectancy between people living in parts of the country with the most wealth and highest education levels, compared to those living in poor, uneducated regions, according to a study published by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington.

These studies show that it is difficult for minorities to have a healthy life expectancy without access to adequate healthcare. And, those with lower incomes are less likely to be able to afford health insurance, which further reduces access to healthcare.

This year's Black Family Conference focused on "Adding Years to Your Life and Life to Your Years." According to community members and faculty, the opening session had the greatest impact and it really set the tone for the rest of the conference.

"I wish that more people would've come out," said Eumeka Taylor, Co-chair of the planning committee for the conference. "Because I believe everyone could've benefited from that speech."