



Canadian Society for
the History of Medicine Société Canadienne
d'histoire de la médecine

14 December 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C. M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister/ Dear Minister

As historians of the history of medicine, human health and disease, we are experts in analyzing the ways in which systemic racism has long impacted the health of Canadians. Our members conduct rigorous historical research on the history of segregated hospitals, the devastating impact of infectious disease on Indigenous populations, the prejudice and systemic racism that has pervaded the history of health care delivery in this country, and the appalling barriers to medical treatment and health services experienced by Indigenous, Black, and other people of colour.

Recently, Joyce Echaquan was subjected to racist taunts from staff as she died in hospital. BIPOC populations have suffered from COVID-19 much more than white Canadians, showing that these historical inequalities are still with us. The Canadian Health Act guarantees medically necessary care to all Canadians, but it is clear that as a country we are not fully living up to this obligation. The Canada Health Act does not foster attention to equitable health outcomes for populations with poorer health outcomes.

The Brian Sinclair Working Group has called for the federal government to adopt anti-racism as a sixth pillar of the Canadian Health Act. We, the members of the Canadian Society for the History of Medicine, strongly support this call. This would prohibit discrimination based on race in our health care system and help to eradicate the systemic inequalities that result in vastly different health outcomes for Indigenous peoples and people of colour in this country.

Sincerely,

Catherine Carstairs

Président/e, Canadian Society for the History of Medicine/Société Canadienne d'histoire de la médecine