

Dear Clinicians,

As this month of celebration of Black History in the U.S. comes to end, I thought it appropriate to call attention to the late Dr. Elijah Saunders. He was a pioneer in medicine who dedicated his life to addressing the disparities in the care of hypertension in the underserved in the city of Baltimore. His career in medicine started with him becoming the first African American resident in internal medicine at the University of Maryland in 1960. He pursued a cardiology fellowship and became the first African American cardiologist in the State of Maryland in 1965. He went on to leadership roles nationally and internationally. He co-founded the American College of Cardiology's Heart House and Association of Black Cardiologists and the International Society of Hypertension in Blacks. Most importantly, he epitomized the ideals that we have discussed as a group over the last several months. He emphasized that if we really wanted to make a dent in the battle against hypertension, we need to partner with community members to promote patient-centered care. He led the march out of the "ivory towers of academia" into the community churches and barbershops where our patients congregate. What better way to understand the underlying conditions that result in elevated blood pressure? What better way to gain an understanding of the perception of the disease in the community? This is the reason that he was so successful in assisting thousands of hypertensive individuals to understand and manage their disease often without medications! He published on issues that educated other healthcare givers on the limited awareness of the disease in the community and reasons for the poor follow-up. And finally, he was a member of the hypertension guidelines committee for the International Society of Hypertension in Blacks. This is exactly the kind of clinician-scientist that you can be confident would write practical consensus building guidelines. Dr. Saunders died in 2015 but his legacy will remain alive with us for years to come.

If you have specific questions related to hypertension management, Dr. Williams can be reached directly by email at Stephen.Williams@nyumc.org, or by phone at 646-320-8075.

THE BP VISIT PROJECT TEAM

