Our vision:
To be a leader in actively dismantling racism in ourselves, in our system and in our community.
At UW Health, our patients are at the center of everything we do. And to be truly patient centered, we must deliver remarkable health care that is equitable and inclusive.

In January 2022, we embarked on a three-year diversity, equity and inclusion strategic plan to guide our work to dismantle racism in ourselves, our system and our community. Throughout our organization, this work is underway to create an inclusive culture and diversify our workforce. UW Health employees are learning about their role in creating a diverse, equitable and inclusive health system and we’ve made strides in our work to apply an equity lens when looking at our policies and practices.

Everyone at UW Health plays an important part in this work and we’re excited about the ways we are collaborating not only across our organization but also throughout our community. Improving the health of our patients requires addressing the social and systemic health disparities in our community. Our population health, community relations and diversity, equity and inclusion teams are working with care teams and services throughout UW Health to develop innovative solutions to address these health inequities and support organizations across our community.

Leveraging our collective expertise to drive greater impact is one of many ways UW Health employees are working to ensure equitable and inclusive care for our patients. We’re proud of the work we’ve done.

Immediate next steps include creating a process for regular check-ins with our employees who identify as Black, Indigenous, people of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, asexual and two spirits to support their well-being. A core UW Health value of embracing diversity, equity and inclusion with behavioral expectations for accountability and positive approaches to people and workplace situations will be embedded into how we select, develop and evaluate employees. And we will continue to lift up and invest in our community partners to eliminate health disparities.

We look forward to sharing our progress along the way.

Alan Kaplan, MD  
He/Him/His  
Chief Executive Officer  
UW Health

Shiva Bidar-Sielaff  
She/Her/Ella  
Vice President/Chief Diversity Officer  
UW Health

Based in Madison, Wisconsin, UW Health cares for more than 720,000 patients each year with more than 1,800 employed physicians and 22,000 employees at seven hospitals and more than 80 clinic locations. This report highlights initiatives based in Wisconsin, citing numbers from calendar year 2022. Work to incorporate UW Health in northern Illinois is in progress.
Building a culture of anti-racism

IN CALENDAR YEAR 2022...

5 NEW WEB-BASED TRAININGS

134 ANTI-RACISM TRAINING SESSIONS

We are expanding diversity, equity and inclusion learning and professional development by

- Integrating longitudinal learning and professional development plans in departments
- Creating additional learning tools and modules
- Facilitating opportunities for providers and staff participation in anti-racism training offered by community partners

LEADER training for 100 nursing leaders

Nearly 100 UW Health nursing leaders, including chief nursing officers from all four hospitals, participated in a half-day or daylong learning session titled “DEI Tools Supporting Through Lived Experiences.”

Some of the most powerful learning came through facilitated, small group discussions based on the real-life experiences of UW Health employees. The nurses were also coached on how to respond when an employee experiences a racial microaggression by using the LEADER Perspective: Listen and validate, Express empathy and Acknowledge harm, ask the employee what they need, Do recognize the cumulative impact, Ensure an anti-racist and inclusive workplace and Reach out to the DEI and Performance Management teams.

“As nurses, we’re trained on a lot of things. It’s easy for us to talk to people about changes in health care, the newest vaccine or a new workflow, but it’s not so easy to talk about DEI. Now, managers can say, ‘I sat in that learning session, I know who to go to. I don’t need to react to this or solve this problem instantly. I can loop in other people and make sure that we do this right instead of just doing this fast.’”

Lea Veltum, RN
(she/her/hers)
Director of Ambulatory Operations, Primary Care
UW Health
Microlearnings incorporated into Department of Surgery curriculum training

The Department of Surgery at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health incorporated DEI microlearnings into regular debriefing sessions to help surgeons understand their implicit biases. The microlearnings were created by the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Department to cover basic concepts that set the tone for discussion and progress to more advanced topics such as intersectionality, implicit bias and microaggressions. Through regular discussions, surgeons could understand the negative impact on patient outcomes, and prepare themselves to address subtle instances of discrimination, bias and harassment.

More than 90% of participants felt the sessions helped them think more deeply about DEI topics. Critical with all DEI work, the group continues to reflect on ways they can improve their microlearning discussions so that all voices are heard and the most marginalized colleagues are supported.

The leadership team that initiated the DEI microlearnings is grateful to have support from their colleagues from the integrated UW Health and UW School of Medicine and Public Health Diversity Equity and Inclusion Department. “A lot of companies and other groups without expertise have had the best intentions but have gone very wrong. It’s a tribute to the leadership of our DEI team. None of us are particular experts in this,” said Elise Lawson, MD, UW Health colorectal surgeon and associate professor in the Department of Surgery.

“The frequency of reviewing these topics and facilitating conversations have brought different things we’ve talked about to the forefront. Not only in my interaction with patients but with colleagues as well. It’s not that I treat people differently—but that it’s top of mind in a good kind of way.”

John Scarborough, MD (he/him/his)
Surgeon, UW Health
Associate Professor, Department of Surgery,
UW School of Medicine and Public Health
Impact through a health equity lens

An equity lens review is part of a suite of tools developed by the UW Health Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Department to guide leaders in identifying potential biases in their processes or programs. The equity lens review uses evaluation and reflection to identify, and if necessary, to mitigate unintended consequences of bias in decision-making and communication.

Health equity lens changes some financial counseling practices

With this new awareness in mind, the Revenue Cycle Department made the following critical changes:

- Began using credit bureau, demographic and behavioral data from a vendor to relieve the burden on patients to provide financial documentation. The vendor provides information that is used to determine which patients are most likely to qualify for 100% financial assistance.
- Implemented an ongoing education program for clinical care teams about the financial assistance policy.
- Established a routine review of financial assistance education provided during employee onboarding to ensure it’s up to date.

UW Health financial counselors work with patients who have trouble paying their medical bills to work out a payment plan or help them apply for financial assistance. Revenue cycle leaders conducted a health equity lens review of the financial assistance policy and financial counseling practices at UW Health. While the policy itself didn’t change, a few of the practices around it did, removing unintentional barriers for patients and improving the objectivity of the approval process.

The review process revealed that the complexity of the application process posed challenges for patients who didn’t have access to technology or the needed documentation, and who may be uncomfortable sharing highly sensitive information with strangers. Some patients with overwhelming medical bills didn’t meet the income requirement for financial assistance, while some UW Health care team members didn’t know help is available as they lacked awareness about the financial assistance policy.

“It’s really important to see each patient as the individual they are. The purpose is to alleviate stress related to their self-pay balance or potential balance, not add to it.”

Ellen Gill
(she/her/hers)
Supervisor, Financial Counseling
UW Health
Reviewing processes for living donor evaluation

Family, friends and altruistic strangers step up to be living donors for patients who need a liver or kidney transplant. A clinical team evaluates all applicants to confirm their organ compatibility with those on the waiting list. While UW Health has one of the most well-respected transplant centers in the country, the pool of potential donors stepping forward was not diverse. And while the problem isn't unique to UW Health, the Living Donor Program asked whether they were doing their part to ensure equitable access to all potential donors.

They evaluated their living donor process with a critical eye. Historically, the review team felt living donor applicants should drive the process and didn’t reach out to potential donors for fear of pressuring them. But they realized that not every potential donor is comfortable reaching out to the medical team. And they may not know medical interpreters are available for phone conversations with the evaluation team.

While there has not been enough time to see a marked difference in the number of people of color applying to be a living donor, the team has seen significant change in their daily practice.

Now the team uses more critical thinking and flexibility to create equity in their evaluation of potential donors. Discussions within the donor selection committee changed from a standardized approach to evaluating each potential donor as an individual and encouraging everyone on the team to ask thoughtful, critical questions.

While a smaller core team engaged in and implemented the equity lens review, the team noticed that all staff have been impacted by this work, changing the way they interact, speak and ask questions to use a more equitable approach to all their work.

James received a new kidney as part of a living kidney donation and transplant chain—the 12,000th kidney transplanted at our Transplant Center.

Read James’ story.
UW Health employs nine full-time nationally certified medical interpreters, contracts with approximately 65 interpreters and engages video and phone interpreter services to ensure the best possible health care experience for patients. Medical interpreters who are UW Health staff attend appointments with patients, assist patients admitted to the hospital and are also available over the phone for patients who have follow-up questions about their care or need help scheduling appointments.

Rodolfo Osuna Leon sees his interpreter role as a way to help patients receive the care and comfort they need. “I’ve always liked helping people and that’s what this is.”

“We’re helping patients connect with their doctors and nurses and understand what they need to do to be well.”

Rodolfo Osuna Leon (he/him/his)
Medical Interpreter
UW Health

“Our interpreters are absolute heroes. They work tirelessly to make sure our patients can connect with the remarkable providers here at UW Health and receive the care they need to thrive in our community.”

Shiva Bidar-Sielaff (she/her/ella)
Vice President/Chief Diversity Officer
UW Health

Delivering equitable and inclusive care

IN CALENDAR YEAR 2022...

300+
INTERPRETATION ENCOUNTERS EVERY DAY

1
AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER

8
SPANISH/ENGLISH-SPEAKING INTERPRETERS

65
CONTRACT INTERPRETERS OF VARIOUS LANGUAGES
Creating a diverse and inclusive culture

Employee Resource Groups support well-being

UW Health established Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) in January 2020 to support employee well-being and a sense of belonging. ERGs focus on the experience and perspectives of people of a particular race, ethnic or cultural background, gender, gender identity, religion, age cohort, sexual orientation, history of disabilities, military services or similar other parameters. In addition to supporting employees through ERGs, Human Resources and the DEI team developed processes to ensure wraparound support for BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ providers and staff to share their experiences at work. We accomplish this by providing support, resources and tools to help employees navigate shared concerns.

Groups include:
- Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander
- Black/African/African American
- Latinx
- Military Service Membership
- Women’s
- BIPOC Residents and Fellows
- QUILTBAG (LGBTQIA2S+)

"Your workplace is your second home, and having support there is really important. The AAPI ERG has given me the chance to be proud of where I came from in a community that supports and understands me. We share things that are work related, but also what our kids are doing. I think it’s of huge importance that UW Health is behind the ERGs—they want you to join and feel the support."

Archana Huxley
(she/her/hers)
Career Pathways Coordinator
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander ERG member
UW Health
Creating a diverse and inclusive culture...

Initiatives achieved to support LGBTQIA2S+ employees

• Created processes for employees who have changed their pronouns and name to update their personal information on Human Resources records

• Provide pronoun pins for any employees who request them to support recognition of their preferred identity

• Offer guidance plans for employees going through gender affirmation, including communications, disclosure memos and an equity toolkit to guide the employee’s leader through the transition

• Intentionally source and display art produced by and supporting the LGBTQIA2S+ community as part of UW Health’s permanent art collection

Health Equity Index leader designation

For the eighth year, UW Health was designated a “LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality Leader” in the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s Healthcare Equality Index (HEI). The HEI is a national benchmarking survey of health care facilities on policies and practices dedicated to the equitable treatment and inclusion of their LGBTQ+ patients, visitors and employees.

The Progress Pride flag flies every day at UW Health. It is a symbol of our commitment to becoming a diverse, equitable and inclusive organization through education, open discussions and looking at how we deliver care to ALL patients. We fly the flag to support, uplift and celebrate the LGBTQIA2S+ community, our colleagues and our patients.

“It’s really nice to be able to come together in the QUILTBAG Employee Resource Group in a space that is safe, where you can just be yourself and be authentic. Everybody there has been through similar experiences … that’s been really empowering and really healing for people in a lot of ways.”

k8 Walton, RN, BSN
(they/them)
QUILTBAG ERG member
UW Health

uwhealth.org/DEI
Investing in our community to dismantle racism

UW Health adopted a partner-centered philosophy of giving that employs equity and anti-racism principles, including nonbureaucratic decision-making, transparent communication and shifting power to those with lived experience. It removes unnecessary barriers to funding and centers voices of color while allowing UW Health to remain highly engaged with the work, outcomes and challenges of community partners.

• Contributions are unrestricted—organizations spend funds as they need

• Our goal is to be accessible and responsive—we do not have an application form

• Rather than require formal reports, we meet regularly with organizations and use reports they produce for themselves and others.

2022 Community giving by the numbers

$5M BUDGET

72% OF THE BUDGET DONATED TO ORGANIZATIONS LED BY PEOPLE OF COLOR

245 NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS FUNDED
Investing to eliminate systemic barriers

YWCA Madison is widely recognized as a community leader for its work to eliminate racism and empower women. The organization takes a holistic approach to helping people by addressing the root causes of poverty such as homelessness, unemployment/underemployment and racism.

As the largest provider of affordable housing to women in Dane County, the YWCA’s 12-story building on Madison’s Capitol Square is home to 450 women and children while another 400 are served through other housing programs. The YWCA partners with more than 250 individuals each year to improve their financial situations through job training and safe transportation. In addition, 2,000 individuals participate in school and community restorative justice programming, reducing the likelihood youth will face negative life-changing consequences. The organization also provides race and gender equity training to 1,800 individuals from the community each year.

In 2017, Vanessa McDowell became the first Black, woman CEO in YWCA Madison’s 108-year history. That same year, the YWCA opened its Empowerment Center on the south side of Madison and purchased the building in 2022 to prevent gentrification and preserve diverse real estate ownership in the area.

“I can’t tell you how much it meant to my staff and me that you heard our challenges and trusted us to have the best solutions to combat these challenges. Your unrestricted gift is your trust in my ability to lead, be nimble and have vision. It means so much to me.”

Vanessa McDowell (she/her/hers)
CEO, YWCA of Madison

UW Health supports the YWCA’s work to address racial equity and social determinants of health by providing $100,000 in unrestricted funding each year.
Impact through capital gifts—investing in a new home for Centro Hispano to meet the needs of a growing Latinx community

Centro Hispano serves more than 2,500 families and 7,000 individuals each year. It is the largest nonprofit in Dane County that supports the Latinx community—the largest and fastest-growing demographic group in Madison, Dane County and Wisconsin.

Centro offers a variety of programs for youth, family and community. UW Health collaborates with Centro on workforce and career development through the Caminos Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training program. Caminos-trained CNAs have become valuable members of our patient care team and we often look to Centro to help us meet the health care needs of the community.

While Centro has doubled its programs to meet the needs of the growing community, lack of physical space means long waitlists. Centro broke ground on a new building, which will allow the organization to serve 1,000 more community members per year and double the youth enrolled in programming.

In addition to an annual unrestricted donation, UW Health contributed $300,000 toward Centro Hispano’s capital campaign to help provide a safe, strong and sustainable home for the Latinx community in the Madison area.
The foundation impacts thousands of Black women across Wisconsin by helping them transform their health and lives through programs and initiatives that promote physical, mental, spiritual and financial well-being.

Impact through transformational gifts—investing in one woman’s vision to benefit thousands

Lisa Peyton-Caire created Black Women’s Wellness Day after the untimely and unexpected death of her mother from congestive heart failure in 2006. At the same time, she knew Black women deserve more than a single day, and in 2012, established the Foundation for Black Women’s Wellness.

In the beginning, volunteers ran the foundation, including Lisa, who was a working mom juggling the work of the foundation and full-time work as a financial executive. A transformational gift of $100,000 from UW Health and local health care partners allowed Lisa to become the first paid CEO and focus her energy on leading the organization full time, which led to enormous growth. The foundation opened the Black Women’s Wellness Center in January 2021 and today operates with a staff of 15.

For five years, UW Health has given the Black Women’s Wellness Center an annual unrestricted gift of $100,000 to expand its programs to thousands of women.

Programs focus on community health improvement, emergency aid and investment in Black women’s entrepreneurship. Further, UW Health partners with the foundation through the Dane County Health Council Saving Our Babies Initiative to improve the health of Black birthing people and babies.
Addressing health disparities

Supporting Black mothers and babies through ConnectRx Wisconsin

ConnectRx is a communitywide care coordination approach launched in 2022 that connects Black pregnant patients to community resources during pregnancy and for up to a year after birth, with an ultimate goal to improve birth outcomes.

The UW Health Population Health Department implemented ConnectRx Wisconsin in partnership with the Dane County Health Council and the Black Maternal and Child Health Alliance. ConnectRx works to reduce disparities in birthweight and infant mortality and support reproductive justice—one of four health priorities based on the most recent Dane County Community Health Needs Assessment.

In the program’s first year, UW Health hired seven community health workers (CHWs) who support eligible pregnant patients to provide culturally responsive care and assist with navigating community resources for help with food, housing and stress. CHWs advocate for patients with landlords, community-based organizations and medical providers. They procure and deliver food, diapers and other essential items to patients. The team also writes letters of support and refers patients to additional resources as needed.

Key 2022 accomplishments include:

- **2,876** pregnant patients screened
- **313** Black patients screened
- **194** patients enrolled
- **75** healthy babies born to enrolled patients

At the federal level, UW Health engaged in advocacy specific to the following:

- Supported the Improve Social Determinants of Health Act of 2021
- Supported the Pursue Equity in Mental Health Act
- Supported the Leverage Integrated Networks in Communities (LINC) to address Social Needs Act of 2021
- Submitted a letter to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration urging changes to the review and approval processes for pulse oximeters to address racial bias
- Signed a coalition letter to Senator Tammy Baldwin and Congresswoman Gwen Moore regarding banning the sale of flavored tobacco, which disproportionately impacts communities of color and the LGBTQIA2+ community

In Wisconsin, UW Health engaged in advocacy specific to the following:

- Establishing suicide prevention grants
- Limiting the sale of tobacco products to individuals under 21
  - Permitting Medicaid reimbursement for physical therapy provided in a group setting
- Opposing limits placed on transgender athletes in K–12 and college-level sports