

**PRESS RELEASE**  
For Immediate Release

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**Aequitas Health Announces Student Speakers for 2025-26 Annual Conference**

Aequitas Health has selected four outstanding medical student presentations for its 2025-26 Annual Conference, showcasing projects that address critical gaps in healthcare equity. The conference will feature innovative approaches ranging from Native American health initiatives to menstrual equity programs.

**Selected Presentations:**

**Native American Health Initiatives: Tribal Grant Funding for Walking Trails and Telehealth Access**

*Brandon Schonour - University of South Alabama*

This presentation shares the journey of a medical student and enrolled citizen of the Southeastern Mvskoke (Creek) Nation who partnered with his Tribal Council to secure more than \$40,000 in grant funding for community health improvements. The projects include constructing walking trails now used daily by families and developing a telehealth building that gives elders regular access to healthcare without leaving home. The presentation encourages other students to take initiative in their own communities, demonstrating that health equity requires solutions beyond the clinic.

**Mini Medical School: Parent Engagement and Take-Home Curriculum**

*Kayla Talebi - Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science*

Building on four years of successful Mini Medical School programming that introduces underserved youth to science and medicine, this presentation showcases an expanded take-home curriculum for 6th and 7th graders. The initiative responds directly to parent feedback requesting middle-grade expansion and includes bilingual parent sheets, hands-on experiment materials, and activities such as splinting, learning about vaccines and community immunity, and taking blood pressure. These resources provide families with accessible science materials they would not otherwise have, increasing equity for students from underresourced communities.

**ICC Skin Equity Initiative and Bilingual Podcast Series**

*Angelica Arzuaga - Chicago Medical School at Rosalind Franklin University*

This presentation details a student-led initiative at the Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC) in North Chicago addressing dermatological health disparities in the Latine community through a bilingual (Spanish and English) educational podcast series. Developed through a community-first approach working with Mano a Mano and the North Chicago Think Tank, the podcast features 15-minute pre-recorded episodes in

conversational format. Considering the increasing presence of ICE in Lake County, the curriculum was adapted into a home-accessible format to reach community members who may face barriers to leaving their homes. The series launches in May 2026 (Melanoma Awareness Month) with topics including skin health myths and sun protection.

## **Menstrual Equity at Nuvance Health**

*Javier Rincon - Larner College of Medicine, University of Vermont*

This presentation details an implementation-ready menstrual equity initiative addressing period poverty through the installation of free menstrual product dispensers in visitor and patient-facing bathrooms throughout the Nuvance Health system. The project has already secured institutional permission for system-wide installation in all women's bathrooms at the main hospital in Danbury, CT, as well as in outpatient community clinics, demonstrating how medical students can drive meaningful policy change within health systems while improving education on menstrual and reproductive health for low-income and minority populations.

*"This conference showcases the transformative power of passionate medical students to drive health equity forward," said Dr. Benson Hsu, President and Chair of Aequitas Health. "By highlighting innovative student projects addressing Native American health, healthcare career pipelines, dermatologic disparities, and period poverty, we aim to inspire the next generation of healthcare leaders. These changemakers demonstrate how medical students can dismantle disparities and create a more just healthcare system for all. Together, they embody the audacious spirit and unwavering commitment needed to build a future where every patient, regardless of background, receives the exceptional care they deserve."*

The projects will be featured at the 2025-26 Aequitas Health Annual Conference, held virtually to ensure accessibility for students across all member chapters.

## **About Aequitas Health:**

Aequitas Health is a national medical honor society founded in 2021 that recognizes and supports medical students dedicated to advancing health equity. Through its network of chapters at medical schools across the United States, Aequitas Health fosters future physician leaders committed to eliminating healthcare disparities. The organization supports local initiatives and individual projects through grants, an annual conference, and opportunities to publish in the Aequitas Health Journal.

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