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Situation getting worse

Black doctors in short supply

By Regina Newell
Staff Writer

The nation suffers from a critical shortage of black doctors. According to an article in the Chapel Hill Newspaper, there are 450,000 doctors in the United States. Of this number, there are only 12,000 black doctors, which constitutes only 2.6 percent of the physician population. This does not compare with the national population of blacks at 11.7 percent. Dr. Louis Sullivan, President of Morehouse Medical school, says, "Despite civil rights gains there has been little improvement since 1950 when 2.1 percent of doctors were black. Budget cuts and backlash against affirmative action plans have also led to a decrease in the number of black medical students."

The number of black students has decreased over the past year. According to **Medical Education and Medical Manpower in NC**, UNC-CH had 87 black students enrolled in medical school in the school year 1982-83. This constituted 13.6 percent of the total enrollment, and was higher than the national average. When compared to other medical

schools in North Carolina, UNC-CH has from two to three times as many blacks enrolled in medical school than Bowman Gray, Duke, or East Carolina. Despite this, UNC-CH has suffered a decrease in the enrollment of blacks in its medical program. Last year, 13.6 percent of the enrolled students were black, this year 12.1 percent are black. Although this average may appear minute on a small scale, if it is looked at nationally, 1 percent is a great decrease.

According to Dr. Marion Phillips, Associate Dean of Student Affairs at UNC-CH medical school, "There is a small decrease in the number of blacks applying to medical schools and there is a slight decline in the number of blacks accepting the UNC-CH offer. Besides not accepting the offer, economics play a key role in a student deciding whether to attend medical school. The economic situation is disproportionately affecting blacks and other minorities, however those students that benefit from scholarships find medical school rather inexpensive," says Phillips.

Phillips also stated that many stu-

dents who do not come from professional families and have few financial resources available to them find it necessary to borrow heavily to finance their medical education.

Mike Smith, a third year medical student at UNC from Selma, NC agrees. He said, "Although it is relatively inexpensive to go to UNC, many times finances can cause a problem. If you are getting out of undergraduate school and had taken out a loan, chances are that you do not want to take out another one and have to pay on both."

Keith Horton, also a third year medical student from Greensboro, disagrees. "Economics does not play a big role at all." Horton said even if he had not received a scholarship, he would have taken out a loan like he did at Duke, where he finished his undergraduate study.

Adrian Douglass, a first year medical student from Elizabeth City, felt there were many reasons for a decrease in blacks besides the economic issue. Douglass said, "UNC-CH is not preferential to blacks. You can't count on being black to get in. Also reverse discrimination has affected the black enrollment." Dr. Phillips said, "There are no quotas for blacks or whites in our admissions process." Dean Stuart Bonduran has charged the admissions committee to be eclectic in its admissions philosophy. "You will find a cross section of total society represented in entering classes and the student body."

Douglass said, "There is a misconception about how a student gets into medical school." He said that he

was under the impression that a student had to have a science degree to be accepted, however, he has found this not to be the case.

So agrees, Carolyn Clark, a first year medical student from Fayetteville. Clark says, "There is a myth about getting into UNC. The school no longer looks only for science majors, it looks for liberal arts majors. UNC tries to have as much diversity as possible."

Mike Smith said that there are interest reasons, too, that are keeping blacks out of medical school. Smith says, "More doors are opening for blacks in the business world and more are deciding to take that route. We are beginning to pursue our interest in other ways." When commenting on the economics issue, Smith said, "Economics cause blacks to seek other avenues to achieve goals. Because of economics, the idea of going to medical school is not as appealing as it once was."

The long term effects of the decrease of black doctors is probably more alarming than the decrease itself. Dr. McArthur Newell, a black physician from Greensboro, NC says, "It will affect the black community greatly, largely because many blacks are on medicaid and most white doctors do not accept medicaid. If you hurt medical care to black people, you hurt medical care period."

Newell said, "Black doctors are more conscious of the total being of their black patients than the white doctors. This is because black doctors are more understanding of the poor socio-economics status of their

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