For the third year, NMA’s Annual Professional Development Series convened at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.’s 48th Annual Legislative Conference. This year’s series, held on Wednesday September 12, 2018, covered the current opioid crisis and treatment options; the interconnectedness of lead and alcohol exposure and violent tendencies in our young people and, in partnership with Movement is Life, looked at the need for better orthopedic surgery care and access to that care, specifically for black women with regards to joint (hip/knee) replacements and other orthopedic surgeries. We also addressed the inequities in pay for orthopedic professionals providing care to those uninsured or underinsured.

This year’s conference was well received and attended by a variety of professionals, both healthcare related and non-healthcare. This undergirds the necessity of our continued presence in various forums because the information we provide effects proposed legislation and the execution of current policies. Specifically, how those policies do and potentially can affect communities of color. We addressed the possible implications of the upcoming election cycle on the administration, delivery and funding of the Affordable Care Act, Medicare and Medicaid and what that will mean to communities of color and the poor.

An important panel on Obesity in African Americans and its Economic Impact was a part of this year’s series, and was an extremely informative panel and well received. Our audience was very appreciative of the information disseminated. Currently, only 2% of African Americans eligible for surgical treatment receive such treatment. Impediments for treatment are access to health care and coverage for the treatment by insurance companies. Generally, viewed as more a physical trait and result of poor individual decision-making, we now see that obesity is a chronic and relapsing neuro-behavioral disorder, according to Michael G. Knight, M.D., MSHP, internal medicine physician and patient safety officer at the George Washington University Medical...
Faculty Associates and assistant professor of Medicine at the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences. It is a disease that is associated with impaired body function, results from physiological dysfunction and causes and exacerbates over 180 significant, comorbid diseases. This is an important way of framing the conversation around this condition as it now identified it as a medical condition and not “a series of poor personal choices.” As a treatable medical condition, the appropriated medical, surgical and psychological /psychiatric treatment should be covered by insurance.

The day concluded with a reception, hosted by NMA, at the Morrison Clark Hotel, Celebrating the Art & Science of Medicine. Featured were local artists, among whom, was a third-year nursing student, originally from Jamaica, who subsidizes her education through the sales of her art.

I was honored to represent NMA by participating in three panel discussions on Friday, September 14th, which covered the effects of childhood separation, access to affordable healthcare for women and men’s health.

Hosted by Congressman Danny Davis of the Seventh Congressional District of Illinois, the Child Welfare Brain Trust panel topic was Immigration: Its Impact on African Diaspora Families and Children, a pivotal conversation that should be had more often in our community as this issue intersects childhood separation with the human rights violations of children of color, immigrants and the poor with regards to immigration policies, sex trafficking, mass incarceration and mass criminalization. This session focused on immigration issues and covered the abuses of children separated from their parents through current immigration policies and sex trafficking. The separation of our youth and their parents due to mass incarceration and mass criminalization also has widespread health implications, which I presented. Your President also gave the keynote at the start of Congressman Davis’s panel on Black Women’s Health and Community Health Centers, which discussed access to affordable health care for women, specifically for those who either have had no insurance or lost employer-based insurance.
Hosted by Congresswoman Dr. Robin L. Kelly, of the Second Congressional District of Illinois and Chair of the CDC Health Braintrust, the CBC Health Braintrust Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Health Equity covered sickle cell disease, HIV/AIDS, maternal wellness and men’s health, of which I panelists. This panel highlighted not only the need for men to go to their doctors, but the pervasiveness of prostate cancer which, in many cases, can be a preventable death in our communities.

I was excited and invigorated after attending a Town Hall meeting, moderated by CNN Political Analyst, Angela Rye, who introduced the audience to the nation’s three African American Gubernatorial candidates, Ben Jealous of Maryland, Andrew Gillum of Florida and Stacey Abrams of Georgia. The atmosphere was electrifying, and they presented themselves to the audience as viable candidates to vote for in November and encouraged all in attendance to vote.