



MAIN MENU

Black female sports medicine physician wants her expertise acknowledged

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Submitted photo

Dr. Shannon Clemons Goode

Fifth in a series

The MSR recently attended a four-day virtual “So You Want A Career in Athletics” (SYWACIA) sports leadership academy for girls and young women of color in sports. Afterwards, several panelists and speakers agreed to share with us, as they did with the attendees, their individual career journeys and lessons learned in their fields. Coaching, executive leadership, sports medicine, and entrepreneurship will be addressed in this multi-part series.

This week: Yes, Virginia, there are Black female doctors.

Dr. Shannon Clemons Goode, a Chicago native, was a high school swimmer who later earned her sports medicine degree from Howard University, attended Meharry Medical College in Nashville, and completed her residency at the University of Miami. She is a primary care sports medicine physician, and the team physician at Xavier University and Dillard University, both in New Orleans, and also works with various metro high schools in the area.

Women are scarce in these positions. The NCAA reported in 2018-19 that only 11.2% of head team physicians and 31.7% of head athletic trainers were women. The percentages of female orthopedic surgeons in the Power Five conferences: 7.14% (SEC), 8.3% (ACC), 30.7% (Big Ten), 50% (Pac-12) and zero in the Big 12. A 2020 Annals of Surgery study noted that 0.78% of U.S. female surgeons are Black.

“I’d always been interested in health care,” Clemons Goode recalled, “and then when I was in high school I was introduced to sports medicine.” She told the MSR that after she got to college, Goode hadn’t yet decided on a major.

“I remember the first biology class at Howard University surrounded by 150 people that look like me and everybody was pre-med. I just decided at that moment that what I was going to do was go to medical school.

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“I was very fortunate to attend Meharry Medical College, another Historically Black College and University in Nashville, Tenn. I did a summer internship program, and my anatomy professor introduced me to a woman who at that time was an orthopedic surgeon who had switched over to administrative duties due to health issues. I did her summer internship program, and I was paired with an orthopedic surgeon,” continued Clemons Goode.

Although Black surgeons like herself aren’t plentiful, “I’ve been able to meet a lot of African Americans and minorities in the field of orthopedics and also sports medicine,” she said. “I’ve been very fortunate in that aspect. There’s really not a lot of us. We are very few and far between.

“The main challenge that I have to deal with is something that most minority physicians have to deal with, and that is people not knowing who you are when you walk in the room. When I was in residency was probably the first time that it was brought to my attention. A lot of times I will walk

into the room and even if you introduce yourself as a doctor, people don't want to label you as a physician in the room.

“So, I think the biggest challenge really is for people to realize that when I walk in the room, I'm actually the treating physician,” said Clemons Goode. “There's a lot of stereotypes that come with just being a Black woman.”

Health care historically “has not done right by minorities. There's so many other gaps in the system that failed [Black] people. A lot of that comes down to the systemic racism that plagues the health care system.”

Now, COVID-19 and the delta variant has added to her challenge as a doctor. “We started to find out with the coronavirus that patients can develop inflammation of the heart called myocarditis. It can be dangerous for the average person,” and even more so with the athletes who make up the bulk of patients she regularly deals with “who are consistently pushing their bodies to the limit.

“Even though we put our athletes through this tough screening process, we're still on edge for every athlete that might have come in contact with COVID-19,” said Clemons Goode. She wants to see more Black female physicians and surgeons: “Hopefully in the future there will be more of us out there.”

Charles Hallman

Charles Hallman is a contributing reporter and award-winning sports columnist at the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder.