



A call for paediatricians to tackle racism



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A very important first policy document, released by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) on July 29, addresses one of the most neglected social determinants of child and adolescent health—racism. Although some progress has been made to recognise racial inequities, the potential for paediatricians and child health workers to disrupt lifelong and intergenerational disadvantages detrimental to health and development has so far not been realised in a systematic way. This policy document is a much needed wake-up call and guide at a time when in many countries the political climate and cultural environment threatens to reverse the little progress that has been made to date.

The three key levels at which racism affects children's development and health—institutional, personally mediated, and internalisation—are all interlinked and cumulative in their detrimental effect. Paediatricians and other health-care professionals are called upon to not only examine their own biases and approach to health care of children and their families but also to engage in a much wider advocacy role. For example, the AAP calls

for paediatricians to “collaborate with government and community-based organizations to help redress biases and inequities in health, justice, and educational systems”. The document also highlights the need for a more diverse workforce and for education that promotes cultural humility and teaches skills to deliver culturally appropriate care.

The guidance is specifically tailored to and especially timely for the US context. In the current climate of the US presidential administration, racism has become a daily discussion point. But other countries should take notice and health workers can take the AAP policy document as a blueprint to examine their own systems. Health workers are in an excellent position to advocate for equity in health and wellbeing against short-sighted, divisive political movements. With increased migration and a global community growing closer, diversity should be positively embraced and celebrated. Children and their families are the right starting point to disrupt the vicious cycle of racial inequity, and health professionals can make a profound difference in doing so. ■ *The Lancet*

For the AAP policy paper see <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/144/2/e20191765.full.pdf>



Bolsonaro threatens survival of Brazil's Indigenous population



REUTERS/Justin Marcelino

Deforestation in the Brazilian rainforest has accelerated at an alarming pace, imperilling the country's Indigenous people, who depend entirely on the land for survival, and also weakening the rainforest's crucial role in stabilising the global climate. According to the most recent satellite data, from July 1 to 25, 2019, 1864 km² of Amazon forest were destroyed, more than triple that for all of July, 2018.

Brazil is home to almost 1 million Indigenous people spread among 300 tribes, about 100 of which are uncontacted. Emboldened by right-wing president Jair Bolsonaro's pledge to abolish Indigenous reserves and open the land to commercial exploitation, illegal loggers, miners, and land-grabbers, often heavily armed, have infiltrated protected Indigenous territories. In the north of the country, for example, an estimated 20 000 illegal gold prospectors have entered the Yanomami reserve, one of Brazil's largest Indigenous areas. Mining pollutes rivers with mercury and silt, erodes river banks, clears trees, and creates large pools of stagnant water—a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Furthermore, infiltrators can transmit diseases to which Indigenous people have little to no immunity.

Indigenous health services are partly independent of the Brazilian health system but are linked instead to the National Indian Foundation—the government body tasked with protecting Indigenous people, which in turn is part of the Ministry of Justice. Indigenous services are therefore much more vulnerable to budget cuts, especially because the target populations are largely powerless people living in regions far away from the country's capital or other major cities. Furthermore, following the recall of more than 8500 Cuban doctors working for the Mais Médicos programme, many Indigenous communities currently have no access to a doctor.

Bolsonaro's presidency represents the most serious threat to Brazil's Indigenous population since the 1988 Constitution granted Indigenous people the right to exclusive use of their land. International public pressure on Bolsonaro to halt the rainforest destruction and protect Indigenous territories from illegal intrusion is crucial to secure the integrity and autonomy of the country's Indigenous population, and to protect them from further harm. ■ *The Lancet*

For the satellite data see <http://terrabrasilis.dpi.inpe.br/app/map/deforestation>