To: Urban Patients  
From: Felix Boakye-Afriyie  
Re: What you should know about your physicians

Can physicians develop genuine relationship with their patients? This issue is wrapped around the idea that there is a socioeconomic gap between many physicians and the patients that they care for, which consequently impedes on their ability to communicate effectively. There are a great number of physicians who come from a wealthy background because the steps towards becoming a physician are hugely influenced by the financial investment of the prospective physician.

- Most middle and high class students who want to become physicians attended private institutions where the curriculums were intensely rigorous prior to matriculating into universities.
- Starting from their undergraduate education, many physicians gained an upper hand over working-class peers because of their ability to attend highly competitive institutions.
- Students with a wealthy background attend school to learn and achieve high marks in preparation for post-graduation endeavors, unlike their working-class students who have to take on multiple jobs while also attending school.

The process of applying to medical schools is also skewed to benefit wealthy students, and discourages many lower-income students.

- A student needs to fend for financial resources to pay for application fees, medical school entrée examination and courses fees, interview expenses, and secondary application fees.
- Since medical school is highly competitive, it is always recommended for a student to apply to at least 14 schools on average, which increases the financial burdens.
- All of these additional economic factors most often discourage lower income students from applying to medical school and going to the medical field.

Knowing more about your physician’s background can help patients develop a better relationship

- Because a majority of physicians’ originate from higher-income families, patients need to be more open about sharing their stories to ensure a trustworthy relationship.
- Patients’ should not assume that their physicians know everything and should not be afraid to ask more questions and clarifications about certain procedures and medications.
- Patients should be comfortable with speaking freely to their physicians on issues related to their health and wellness.

These steps and many others will provide a stage for physicians and patients to learn from each other and build a relationship rooted in truth and awareness of the limitations of information each one know about the other.