

Securing hardware for race-neutral PFT at SBH Health System



The challenge

SBH Health System sought to adopt race-neutral equations for their patients' pulmonary function tests (PFTs) but faced significant challenges:

- Staff **awareness** of race-based clinical algorithms was limited.
 - Many were familiar with race-based treatment guidelines in areas like hypertension prescription management, but not the use of race in PFTs.
 - To address this gap, the health system held grand rounds to educate clinical staff on the role of race adjustment in PFTs, the disparities in disease staging and diagnosis that result from race-based testing protocols, and the importance of transitioning to race-neutral equations.
- SBH's existing PFT hardware was **outdated** and the machines could not support the necessary updates for the use of race-neutral PFT equations.
 - To update clinical workflows, new hardware needed to be purchased.
 - New PFT machines come at a significant cost that often requires fundraising.



The process

- As a member of NYC Health's Coalition to End Racism in Clinical Algorithms (CERCA), SBH was able to make a **compelling case** that acquiring new hardware for PFTs was essential to addressing inequitable patient outcomes through race-neutral testing.
- CERCA, with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), facilitated a partial grant to help cover the cost of new PFT machines.
 - Dr. Eric Appelbaum, Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer and Dr. Daniel Lombardi, Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer of SBH, presented the case for new hardware to RWJF, securing an initial grant through CERCA, which served as a critical catalyst for obtaining additional funding.
 - With partial funding in place, clinical champions including Dr. Daniel Laurie, Section Chief of Pulmonary Medicine, successfully advocated to SBH's administration and finance departments, who approved the remaining funds.
- Once full funding was secured, Melissa Fletcher, SBH's Director of Respiratory Care, led the decision-making process for selecting new PFT machines.
 - A technologically proficient clinical champion from her team played a key role in

training staff on updated clinical workflows using race-neutral PFT equations.



The impact

Collective action is made possible through initiatives like CERCA.

- ✓ SBH's participation in CERCA provided access to critical resources and funding opportunities.

Partial grants can help secure full funding.

- ✓ The RWJF grant strengthened the health system's case to internal stakeholders, demonstrating external validation and reducing financial risk.

Technology upgrades can improve efficiency and standardization.

- ✓ The new PFT machines saved time and streamlined workflows by defaulting to race-neutral equations, eliminating the need for manual input.

Patient education and engagement are crucial for a successful transition to race-conscious medicine.

- ✓ Ensuring patients recognize the shift to race-neutral PFTs and its benefits is key for building engagement and trust.
- ✓ While patients currently receive explanations during testing, there is demand for additional online resources to support patient education.

Demonstrating impact through data is essential for long-term sustainability.

- ✓ According to Dr. Anita Soni, Chair of the Department of Medicine at SBH, tracking pre- and post-transition data to assess how race-neutral PFTs impact disease staging and diagnosis for patients is a top priority.
- ✓ Demonstrating positive return on investment (ROI) through improved patient outcomes is critical for maintaining institutional support and reinforcing the value of de-implementing harmful race-based clinical algorithms.

“By being involved in CERCA, we saw the merits of getting appropriate data and a new machine. Our PFT hardware was very old and couldn't accommodate any changes. When we brought that to the CERCA team, and with the help of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, we were able to get a partial grant to purchase a new machine.

— **Dr. Daniel Lombardi, DO**

*Senior Vice President and
Chief Medical Officer, SBH
Health System*