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Altruism in Medicine Institute

New Year 2019 Message from the Altruism in Medicine Institute  
Founder and President, Barry Kerzin, M.D.

## **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

With the sudden rise of the #MeToo movement, my heart goes out to not only the women who have already experienced sexual harassment, and certainly there are many, but also to those yet to come. Some will unfortunately experience the same pain, fear, humiliation, and stigma of sexual harassment as the stories being brought to light by the brave women who have been reporting their experiences in the early part of 2018. These stories started emerging from the United States, and quickly spread around the world. Of course some countries have strict censorship and these stories are blocked from surfacing, at least for now.

In this time of tension as so many women speak out, men having influence and power must lend legitimacy and value to the words of thousands of women who have spoken out about their painful experiences of sexual harassment. It is important that men and women having influence in all walks of life in every country make it clear that harassing behavior is never acceptable. Men who openly address the issue of mistreatment of women in a confident and respectful manner empower women and advance our organizations to be more inclusive and productive work environments. It is especially important that men spark this conversation in groups with power and authority. The message of leaders must be that sexual harassment will not be tolerated and **diversity is a core value**. To create an inclusive community, optimize talent, and advance our organizations toward success, collaboration and inclusion across gender lines is essential. Professional behavior imbued with integrity, respect, and tolerance for differing views, is key to establishing a safe environment.

Harassment goes beyond gender. It has been rampant across ethnic lines for centuries. African American and Latinos-Latinas have and do experience discrimination in all sectors of society, where it be housing, employment, education, and simply moving from here to there. Employment and poverty are disproportionate among African-Americans and Latinos and Latinas. The rates of unemployment in

inner depressed cities is often above 25 or even 40% compared to the national average of about 4%. Native Americans in the US by in large live in abject poverty. Sexual harassment and abuse in this community (often perpetrated by outsiders) is rampant. Yet Native American women are the only group of women in the United States where sexual harassment is not being monitored. This is shameful neglect from the Federal government. All of this perpetuates poverty and the vicious cycle of discrimination and exclusion. Diversity is left behind. This is not acceptable. We must include all our citizens and residents by providing proper education, jobs, housing, and healthcare. The wealthiest nation in the history of man/women-kind owes this to its people. Inclusion is a right, not a privilege.

Access to healthcare services including mental health to all is essential in the richest country the world has ever seen. It is the foundation along with education of our democracy. This is true globally where mental health services are at best sparse and at times non-existent. In areas of conflict like war and terrorism, quality mental health services are sine qua non to a civil society. We must rectify these inequities. We are all brothers and sisters, wherever we live.