Dialogue 4

Genetics, Technology and Ethnic Identity: Lessons from Sickle Cell Disease

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Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Room 207 (across from Library)

The development and use of new diagnostic and therapeutic technologies have sparked potent controversies in American medicine, particularly over the past 30-40 years. The history of diagnostic advances and interventions related to sickle cell disease, ranging from antibacterial therapy and pain management to bone marrow transplantation and prospects of gene therapy, represents an important case in point and provides a basis for exploring the ways in which ideas about race and ethnicity inform medicine’s deployment of technology and therapy.

Dr. Wailoo is an Associate Professor in the Department of Social Medicine in the School of Medicine and in the Department of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is author of Drawing Blood: Technology and Disease Identity in 20th Century America (Johns Hopkins 1997) and of the forthcoming Dying in the City of the Blues: Sickle Cell Anemia, Race, and Visibility in the Modern South, and, with Stephen Pemberton, of Genes, Risk, and Justice: The Transformation of Genetic Disease in America.

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