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Letter to the Editor:

On race and coronavirus, let's worry more about death than infection. Ask if blacks are disproportionately dying from coronavirus. The answer is yes. That is important, newsworthy, and troubling.

A disproportionate number of black males over 60 with one or more pre-existing medical conditions die from the virus. This demographic is medically vulnerable, as they have pre-existing conditions that may include diabetes (highly associated with obesity), lung disease, heart disease or kidney disease. Thus, their immune system was already vulnerable.

The National Bureau of Economic Research found that black men treated by a black doctor are 49% more likely to get a diabetes screening, 71% more likely to get a cholesterol screening and 56% more likely to get a flu shot. These screenings directly tie to the pre-existing conditions of those most likely to die from coronavirus. It is not that they are black, it is that they are not getting care.

We have too few black doctors. Abraham Flexner wrote his eponymous report in 1910 that closed all but two historically black medical schools in the US. Black physicians comprise only 4% of all physicians, and 80% of those physicians graduated from one of those two schools not closed as a result of Flexner's report. We need more black doctors.