



A letter to the **Canadian public** from dermatologists, on the reality of **race, ethnicity and racial attitudes**



We are dermatologists. We treat people's skin. All people. All skin.

When the conversation turns to race, ethnicity, and anti-racism, as it has during the past weeks, you sometimes hear well-meaning people say, "I don't see the colour. I only see the person."

We do see the colours.

We see the spectrum of tone and pigmentation levels in our patients and recognize the nuances of dermatologic features in each individual skin type.

These colours are a result of human biology: specifically, a substance called melanin.

According to the Fitzpatrick phototyping scale used in dermatology, the spectrum of skin hues fall within a range of six types, from the least pigmented, "Type I", to the most richly pigmented, "Type VI". This scale is used in dermatology to characterize an individual's response to sun exposure, which often correlates with one's constitutive skin pigmentation (or melanin content.)

While each skin type has its own structures and characteristics, it is a long-established principle of science that no skin type or hue is superior to another. In that sense, we also know that melanin variations in the skin may represent the very least of peoples' differences.

We do see the colours, and each is exquisite.

We see diversity, and it's a thing to be celebrated.

And while it's true that all people are interconnected, some experiences, regrettably, are disproportionately borne by certain members of our human family.

Too recently, and too often, too many people—in particular, Black and Brown and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people—have been subject to discrimination, challenges, disparities, and far worse, on the basis of their skin type.

We believe that patients of all races deserve respect, opportunity, justice, and the best medical care available.

We meet this moment by stating that we are proud to stand with our neighbours, family, and colleagues of colour.

We recognize, and we deplore, the inequalities still faced by many in society. We say that Black Lives Matter.

SIGNED by the Organizers, Faculty, Delegates, and Friends of "Skin Spectrum Summit: The Canadian Conference on Ethnodermatology and Skin of Colour"

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The space for this message has been provided by **Chronicle Companies** (www.chronicle.ca), organizers of the Sixth Skin Spectrum Summit: The Canadian Conference on Ethnodermatology, Oct. 1-6, 2020.

Skin Spectrum Summit is an educational conference exclusively for physicians and healthcare providers. Find out more at www.skinspectrum.ca

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