

Proudly Spotighting Dr. Cheryl Lee,
the ABU's First Black Female Trustee



BLACK | HISTORY MONTH

Dr. Lee is Professor and Chair of the Department of Urology at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center where she holds the Dorothy M. Davis Endowed Chair in Cancer Research. She is also the Vice President of the OSU Physicians and Faculty Group Practice. Her career focus has been improvement of surgical outcomes for bladder cancer patients through interdisciplinary research, clinical trials, and outcome studies.

Active in the education of students, residents, and practicing urologists, Dr. Lee has supported educational initiatives through her roles on the AUA Education Council, AUA Science and Quality Council, and the AUA Update Editorial Board. She has played a key role in the board certification of urologists in America through her service on the ABU Board of Trustees, ABU/AUA Examination Committee, ABU Oral Board Examination Committee, and the Oncology Knowledge Assessment Test Committee of the SUO. She is also the Chair of the ABU Committee for Diversity and Inclusion.

Dr. Lee is originally from New York, though has lived in the Midwest for most of her adult life. She is married to William (Bill) Amato, and has two children, Jackson and Ashton.

What recent advancement in your specialty of bladder cancer do you find most exciting and why?

It is an incredibly exciting time to manage bladder cancer! Over the past few years we have truly advanced our therapeutic strategies for patients. We now have biomarker driven therapies; an infusion of several new FDA approved drugs to treat the continuum of bladder cancer patients in various disease settings; combination drug strategies; and, importantly, increasing investments in research. Patients with advanced disease are now experiencing increased response rates and meaningful improvements in overall survival.

As a black woman, you've been a pioneer in the field of urology. What avenue of change do you think best encourages more black women to now enter the specialty?

As a field, there has been a greater commitment to diversity, inclusion, and mentorship of women and trainees of color. The work done by the AUA Diversity and Inclusion Task Force has also been a visible example of making structural and organizational changes to our national society to increase engagement of historically underrepresented groups. A real commitment to increase opportunities for committee participation, meeting visibility, and leadership opportunities for women and African Americans permits all members of our urologic community to thrive. Trainees see this and identify with role models. Black women are at the intersection of two groups striving to bring a unique perspective to urology. We now have several dynamic black women in residency, fellowship and in the beginning of their careers. These women are more visible on social media, at meetings, and through their publications. This energy is creating an environment that is attractive to other black women, who then see a path for themselves in the field of urology. As chairs and program directors, we need to seek these candidates out, recognize their potential, and further develop their interests in urology. Importantly, we all need to have expectations for their success and then enable them to reach it.

You've taken leadership roles in promoting health equity. Because everyone can take part in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion, were you to break it down for your peers, what single, simple step would make for a meaningful starting point?

When you truly get to know someone, you often find many overlapping interests and commonalities. In pursuit of inclusive excellence, we should all seek to create environments that encourage a sense of belonging. This initially may mean stepping out of one's comfort zone. Get to know someone with a different background. Sit next to someone new at a meeting. Strike up a conversation with someone who may actively have a different perspective. Then, work hard to listen. Meaningful relationships start this way.

If playing an icebreaking game, what little known fact do you like to share about yourself?

I've always wanted to be an NFL referee. (I better not quit my day job.....)