

Chester Pierce

Chester M. Pierce, M.D., was born in Glen Cove, NY in 1927 and was a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association (APA). Dr. Pierce was a psychiatrist, researcher, and academician dedicated to addressing health disparities and promoting human rights and youth education.

He earned a medical degree from Harvard Medical School in 1952 and held the rank of Commander in the U.S. Navy. While at Harvard College, Dr. Pierce became the first African American college football player to compete against an all-white university south of the Mason-Dixon line.

In 1969, Dr. Pierce became the founding president of the Black Psychiatrists of America and spoke on racism in America, first proposing the term racial "microaggressions." He was the senior advisor on the creation of the acclaimed educational children's television series "Sesame Street" which presented a vision of an integrated society.

Dr. Pierce was active in numerous organizations including the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Research Council, the National Science Foundation, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. He was the national chair of the Child Development Associate Consortium and served as senior consultant to the Surgeon General of the U.S. Air Force.

He was the president of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and the American Orthopsychiatric Association and served on the board of the World Association of Social Psychiatry and The Carter Center Mental Health Task Force.

Dr. Pierce spent the majority of his career as a psychiatrist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and as professor of psychiatry and education at Harvard Medical School and Harvard University.



- Pioneer and thought leader in addressing health disparities
- First proposed term racial "microaggressions"
- Senior advisor on creation of "Sesame Street"
- Visionary in global mental health

He was a senior psychiatrist and the first African American full professor at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) where, in 2009, the MGH global psychiatry program was named after him – The Chester M. Pierce, M.D. Division of Global Psychiatry.

Dr. Pierce lectured on all seven continents and received numerous national and international awards, including the APA Human Rights Award and an APA Special Presidential Commendation, honorary degrees, and fellowships up until his death in 2016.

In 2017, the APA Human Rights Award was renamed in his honor by the APA Board of Trustees. Dr. Pierce is remembered as a pioneer and thought leader who inspired others through his deeds, intellect, humility, and resilience.

- "Chester M. Pierce, MD: A Life That Mattered" (*Psychiatric News*)
- Chester M. Pierce Division of Global Psychiatry (Harvard/MGH)
- Chester M. Pierce Human Rights Award (APA)
- "Impact of Microaggression on Mental Health Outcomes" (APA)