

Talking About Skin Lightening, Safely: A Guyanese-Designed Community Conversations Toolkit

Guyanese-born doctors launch a toolkit to raise awareness on unsafe skin lightening and empower communities with safer, healthier choices.

GEORGETOWN, GUYANA, September 8, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Communication and Culture, LLC](#) (CCLLC), founded by Guyanese-born Dr. Donna A. Oti,

“

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*Dr Denise Johnson, M.D.,
FACOG, FACHE*

today announced the launch of its Skin Lightening Community Conversations Toolkit—an evidence-based guide designed to help organizations, health leaders, and community advocates raise awareness about the dangers of unsafe skin lightening practices.

For decades, cosmetic products contained hydroquinone and mercury. Today, health risks including rashes, facial swelling, permanent discoloration, and damage to the nervous and immune systems have been well documented as adverse effects. The new toolkit equips trusted community leaders—faith leaders, educators, and health

professionals—with strategies, resources, and discussion guides to lead culturally respectful conversations that inform and protect.

“I've seen the preventable harm tied to mercury- and hydroquinone-containing 'lightening' products. OTC hydroquinone is not recognized by the FDA as safe and effective, and mercury has no place in cosmetics. Our duty is to make that plain and give communities practical steps to prevent harm—this toolkit translates policy into everyday prevention,” said Denise Johnson, MD, former Acting Secretary of Health and Physician General of Pennsylvania,

Skin lightening is a billion-dollar industry that reaches far beyond communities of color. Many consumers—across races and ages—use “lightening” or “brightening” products to address age spots, melasma, acne marks, and other hyperpigmentation concerns. The toolkit underscores safety for all users and the importance of culturally competent education.

“For too long, unsafe skin lightening products have been heavily marketed despite the risks to users' health. By centering community voices and science, this toolkit empowers trusted leaders to hold conversations that protect health and dignity,” said Donna Oti, Ph.D., CEO, Communication and Culture, LLC.

“Skin-lightening is especially popular in nations with African and Asian populations. My hope is that our efforts will help educate as many people as possible about the dangers and risks...” said David Person, DavidPersonMedia, LLC.

The toolkit draws from a longitudinal analysis of 240+ advertisements (1945–2023), documenting how persuasive themes have shifted from overt “bleaching” and “whiteness” to subtler appeals of “radiance,” “tone,” and “health.”

“In the chase for normative standards of beauty, generations of women have been exposed to risk from harmful chemicals in unregulated skin lightening products. Grounded in a data-driven approach and recommendations from a global body of research, our Community

Conversations Toolkit reflects a commitment to supporting organizations and leaders as they guide their communities toward informed choices for both mental and physical health,” said Eleana Lazarus, Ph.D., co-author of the research.

“Language is power, be it spoken, written, body, or visual language. Skin lightening advertisements have targeted women for decades through written and visual language, while trying to take advantage of insecurities and Eurocentric beauty standards. It is my hope that the Community Conversations Toolkit proves a useful tool for undoing some of the damage caused by advertising while also helping women feel beautiful in their own skin.” said Hannah Barr, MA, co-author of the research.

Call to Action

Communication and Culture, LLC invites nonprofit organizations, community groups, and cosmetic manufacturers committed to consumer safety to partner in this effort. “Partnering with companies that offer safe, culturally respectful alternatives is the next step toward ensuring equity in beauty and health,” Oti said. Together, we can expand education, offer safe alternatives, and advance health equity for communities worldwide.

For partnership opportunities or to access the toolkit, visit www.toolkit.3cfirm.com or email donnaoti@3cfirm.com.

Donna A Oti

Communication and Culture, LLC

+1 256-270-9155



Dr. Denise A. Johnson, Guyana-born physician and former Acting Secretary of Health of Pennsylvania, co-leads the launch of the Skin Lightening Community Conversations Toolkit.

donnaoti@3cfirm.com

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