Medicine and Meharry Medical College. The amount was not broken down by school but will be used to make pharmacy upgrades to meet clinical trial requirements and create customized training programs for researchers who can lead the investigations, among other

“It will definitely open doors for us,” said Priscilla Pemu, director of the Clinical Research Center at the medical school and associate dean of clinical research. She said the funding expands upon about $14 million the medical school received in 2021 from another pharmaceutical company, Novartis, to expand diversity among clinical trial investigators and participants. Novartis also made a 10-year commitment to work with Morehouse School of Medicine, other historically Black colleges and universities and medical schools, along with pharmaceutical companies such as Sanofi to improve health equity.

Such e orts grew from concerns raised during the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately impacted people of color, said Pemu, who is also a professor of medicine. She said some of the clinical trials the funding will address include issues of obesity, asthma and cancers that disproportionately impact the Black community.

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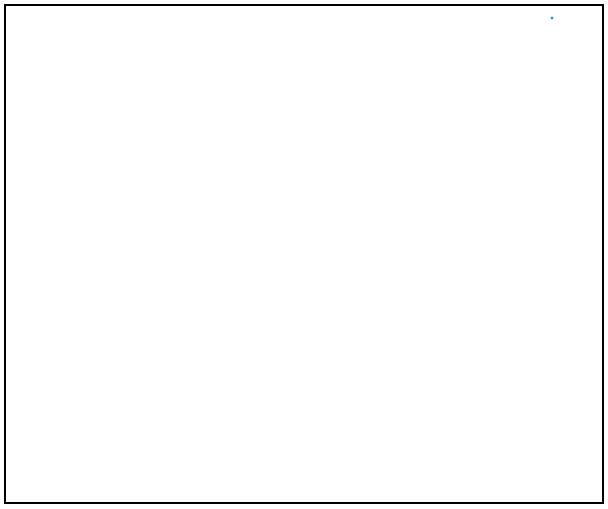
The massive gift was expected to tackle the medical school's rising costs and associated student debt, which makes medical education di cult for aspiring doctors. Black men and women graduating from medical school are more likely to have debt than other racial and ethnic groups, according to a study last year detailed in The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education.

The newest funding to the medical schools helps address the lack of diversity in clinical trials, research studies in which volunteers evaluate products, such as medications, vaccines or medical devices, for safety and e ectiveness.

"Ensuring people from diverse backgrounds join clinical trials is key to advancing health equity," the FDA stated in its consumer information online. "Participants in clinical trials should represent the patients that will use the medical products. This is often not the case — people from racial and ethnic minority and other diverse groups are underrepresented in clinical research. This is a concern because people of di erent ages, races and ethnicities may react di erently to certain medical products."