



Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP  
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Dr Mr Hancock,

We read with extreme disappointment the findings of Public Health England's (PHE) report 'Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19'. The review commissioned to evaluate the disproportionate number of BAME deaths from COVID-19 reveals no recommendations, actions or steps to be taken to address the gross disparity in deaths. We note that it was previously stated that Professor Fenton would lead the rapid review and that PHE now states that he now only contributed. An inquiry of this importance and sensitivity mandates the participation and leadership of BAME doctors. Well qualified professionals such as Professor Fenton are done a disservice if used in a tokenistic manner.

We have known for years about poorer health outcomes in deprived areas of the country, with successive governments failing to act. Now we see that mortality rates in patients from the most deprived areas were more than double the least deprived areas. Clearly, we are not all in it together.

The risk of death of people of Bangladeshi ethnicity was twice that of White British people. In people of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian, Caribbean and Other Black ethnicity it was between 10-50% higher.

These findings are not limited to patients of BAME ethnicity either. BAME Health and Social Care workers have also been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 too. Risks assessments of staff in many cases are meaningless unless steps are taken to safeguard those at risk. In many instances risk assessments are still not being conducted, if they are, numerous colleagues report that no action is taken and they continue to work in the same risky environments. Public Health England need to closely examine how risk is assessed and produce a national framework with a view to removing BAME staff from frontline roles when they are deemed to be at highest risk.

We are concerned that the report seems to not have been published in full. Multiple sources have reported that sections highlighting the concerns of many groups have been

removed from the published report. Obstructing, delaying and not publishing these submissions to dampen down the report is an affront to the memory of all BAME patients and NHS co-workers we are mourning. It acts to callously discard the sacrifice of our BAME colleagues who worked on the frontline, knowing that they were at increased risk of dying. Others came out of retirement, worked without adequate PPE and died in the line of duty.

Whilst the report highlighted issues, what we need now are actions. Actions that put lives ahead of politics. This is a matter beyond party politics or approval ratings, a failure to take action now risks preventable deaths.

We call on you and the government to:

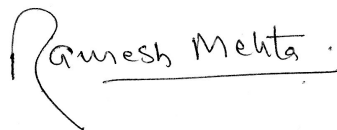
1. Publish the full version of the report including the submissions made to the rapid review
2. Agree to regularly meet with us and BAME groups to agree an agenda for changes that must take place to protect our patients and healthcare workers.
3. Commission Public Health England to create a national framework for risk assessing BAME healthcare workers
4. Mandate that all Acute, Mental Health, Community and Ambulance Trusts submit weekly data to NHS England/Improvement about the number of risks assessments conducted
5. Mandate that all healthcare settings conduct risk assessments and remove BAME staff deemed to be high risk from frontline roles which carry the highest risk.
6. Engage in public health messaging in multiple languages, particularly addressing communities which have been deemed to be high risk
7. Work with organisations, charities and regional directors of public health in areas of social deprivation to ensure that all sections of society are considered and protected.

We cannot just sit idly by, not respond to these findings and let vulnerable groups in our society suffer the effects of this devastating disease. The terms of reference simply do not go far enough. Work with us, with colleagues across government including Equalities Minister Kemi Badenoch MP to address some of these key issues before a second wave of COVID-19.

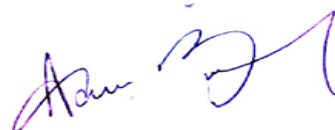
Your sincerely,



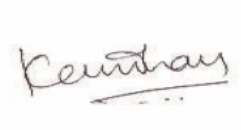
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