

Correspondence

Letter to editor: Emerging public health challenge in UK: perception and belief on increased COVID19 death among BAME healthcare workers

ABSTRACT

A cross-sectional survey of Black Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) health care workers evaluating their perception and belief on increased Coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) death among BAME health care workers was conducted in Leicester. They found that 72% of respondents had some form of impact on their mental health but the majority were satisfied with the overall support they received from local health care providers. In conclusion, adequate culturally competent mental health support is necessary as the BAME workforce is routinely involved in frontline work.

Keywords public health, mental health, ethnicity

Dear Editor

We thank Moorthy and Sankar¹ for this cross-sectional study exploring the perceptions and beliefs of Black Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) health care workers, a group that has been disproportionately affected during the Coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) pandemic. As final year medical students of the BAME demographic who will soon be joining the NHS workforce, it is important that the effects of the COVID pandemic are studied and interventions are designed and implemented.

The central themes gathered from the cross-sectional study were the percentage of BAME health care workers in the workforce, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and support from the NHS, mental health and BAME COVID-19 death rate beliefs. While it was interesting to see that 72% of the respondents had some form of impact on their mental health, equally important would have been the clarification on areas of mental and physical well-being that were impacted by COVID. Elaborating on these areas would help influence the culturally competent mental health support suggested by the authors. Masi *et al.*² explore these areas extensively by reporting notably on sleep, diet, exercise patterns and mood. As a result, they aim to provide targeted interventions for children

with neurodevelopmental disabilities and their parents who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Exploring the beliefs for the disproportionate death among the BAME population in the survey was an interesting addition. Most of the respondents, like in various studies, believed that pre-existing co-morbidities (e.g. hypertension and heart disease) and lack of PPE were the reasons for the increased risk of complications and death in the BAME population. This information should encourage and promote long-term public health campaigns specifically targeted at the BAME community to help raise the awareness of these conditions and how to manage them.

Moorthy and Sankar emphasized¹ the concern and anxiety experienced by BAME health care workers who are on the frontline and therefore at higher risk of infection. Thus, it was encouraging to note that 80.5% of respondents were satisfied with the overall support they received from their workplace and the trust. As medical students about to enter the NHS workforce, it is reassuring to note that our requests will be heard and that the UK NHS workforce will be supportive however they can. For instance, Darent Valley Hospital (an acute district general hospital in Dartford, England) has launched various services since the pandemic and adapted

them to cater to the mental health of their health care staff, such as drop-in services and helplines. An investigation into the different ways in which trusts have reacted to the mental health needs of their health care workers and how effective they are is needed. This evaluation can be shared across NHS England for the benefit of all NHS health care workers, including those of the BAME community.

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Conflicts of interest

None to declare.

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References

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- 2 Masi A, Mendoza Diaz A, Tully L *et al*. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the well-being of children with neurodevelopmental disabilities and their parents. *J Paediatr Child Health* 2021 May;**57**(5):631–6.

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