



British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin

Ref: BAPIO/1412/JCVI

14 December 2020

By email: jcvi@phe.gov.uk

Professor Andrew Pollard,
Chair,
Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation
JCVI Secretariat,
Public Health England,
Wellington House,
133-155 Waterloo Road.
London, SE1 8UG

Dear Professor Pollard,

Covid-19 vaccinations and the BAME community

We understand that the advice from JCVI is that the vaccination programme will not target the BAME community specifically. The advice notice which we presume has been sent to all Trusts and CCGs wrongly states that ethnicity is not a risk for catching the virus. This is unfortunately against the existing evidence from our own study as well as other groups, that ethnicity is indeed a risk factor.

It also flies in the face of the existing data on morbidity in BAME doctors and nurses for example. We know that over 90% of doctors and over 70% of nurses who died from the virus were of a BAME origin. Not all of them had existing co-morbidities. Given that BAME healthcare staff already feel undervalued we think it is important to get the messaging as well as the strategy right. Time and again there are failures in doing exactly that, and this again is a lost opportunity.

The other related, but wider issue, is how the benefits of the vaccination are being communicated to the general BAME communities. There is once more a poor attempt in ensuring that culture-sensitive and culture-appropriate material is circulated across all channels so that people can make an informed choice. We hear this not just from the ordinary person but also from healthcare individuals that they will not have the vaccine, but for the wrong reason.

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And so we are writing to ask you to review the strategy and to ensure that ethnicity is taken into account when making decisions to vaccinate healthcare workers as well as the general population. We appreciate that you may not have personally been

involved directly in the discussions due to your declared interest in the Oxford vaccine but as chairman of the committee we believe that you have an overriding responsibility to ensure that policy implementation in these matters which are of enormous importance to the public, especially the BAME community, are done so to protect the vulnerable community.

We have recently written to the Health Secretary Matt Hancock (copy attached) pledging our support for the vaccination programme because as an organisation we play an important role in the welfare of BAME healthcare workers.

We would therefore urge you to take action now, rather than risk more lives being lost with this surge in infection rates.

Yours sincerely,

Ramesh Mehta

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cc: Mr Matt Hancock, Health Secretary
Sir Simon Stevens, CEO, NHS E/I
Ms Prerana Issar, Chief People's Officer
Ms Marie Gabriel, Chair, Race and Health Observatory

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