



# British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin

1 December 2020

By email: [psmatthancock@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:psmatthancock@dhsc.gov.uk)

The Rt Honourable Matt Hancock  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria St  
Westminster  
London  
SW1H 0EU

Dear Mr Hancock,

## **BAME community and Covid-19 vaccination campaign**

Firstly, we would like to thank you for the personal and engaging message that you sent to us just in time for our annual three-day conference from 21-23 November 2020. There were almost 900 delegates logged in for each day, and more relevantly we had peak registrations on the main conference day when your recorded message was played out. We were delighted that you acknowledged and expressed pride at how BAPIO members have battled during the pandemic and how we as an organisation have risen to the challenge of working with government, the NHS and other organisations to meet the formidable task of defeating the virus. Given the pressures on your time, we were pleased with both the responsiveness to our request as well as the content of your message which was also very well received by our delegates.

Thank you also for other key messages, particularly congratulating our Executive on launching the British Indian Nurses Association (BINA), as well as your commitment to work with us over further issues that will arise during and beyond the pandemic.

And in that spirit, we are writing to you now to raise our concerns about the heartening news about the vaccines for Covid-19, and yet the negative momentum that seems to be building around it especially from the BAME community. You will be aware that our organisation was the first to raise concerns about the loss of BAME doctors in our letter to you and others on 7 April 2020. Unfortunately, the government and the NHS were slow to react to that letter and therefore we feel that lessons need to be learned and early engagement with those in leadership positions will help put the right context in the debate on the vaccine.

**President: Dr Ramesh Mehta, OBE**

**Secretary: Prof Parag Singhal**

**Corporate Office: The Chapel, Trinity Gardens, 9-11 Bromham Road, Bedford MK40 2BP UK**

**Chairman: Dr JS Bamrah CBE**

**Treasurer: Dr Arvind Shah**

T: +441234212879

Email: [admin@bapio.co.uk](mailto:admin@bapio.co.uk)



BAPIO



@BAPIOUK

A targeted approach is needed which should include BAME public figures and organisations like BAPIO being at the forefront of the campaign against potential anti-vaxxers. This is going to be key in any strategy of convincing members of our community to willingly engage with your vaccination programme which needs to be translated to several languages, as otherwise we believe that it will put those very people at risk who are most in danger from the ravaging effects of the virus. There will always be those who are against vaccinations, but at least we should play our part in ensuring they make an informed choice, whereas at the moment it seems to us people are making choices through misinformation and disinformation.

Secretary of State, time is of the essence and so we would urge you to help roll out such a strategy in the interest of the health of not just the BAME community, but also given the infective nature of the virus, the general population in the UK. The sooner the better, and we would of course be very willing to play our part in educating and messaging those who fall within our jurisdiction.

We look forward to hearing from you on how BAPIO can be part of that campaign.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Mehta', with a large, stylized initial 'R' on the left.

Ramesh Mehta

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JS Bamrah', with a large, stylized initial 'J' on the left.

JS Bamrah

cc: Sir Simon Stevens, CEO, NHS England

cc: Ms Prerana Issar, Chief People Officer, NHS England and Improvement