

JBIMA Editorial

Dr Sharif Kaf Al-Ghazal, Editor in Chief

Assalamo Alaikom

Winter is always a challenging season for healthcare staff; the confluence of flu season, the holidays and colder weather mean that the elderly and more vulnerable are prone to suffering. The short days and long nights affect us all, and with the cost of living crisis showing no signs of abating, this year matters are particularly tough.

NHS staff are still doing an incredible job however, and whilst morale is understandably down, and the media is filled with numerous stories of hospitals being understaffed and patients facing ridiculously long waiting times, you get on with the job admirably. Inequality within the NHS, both as a staff member and as a patient, means that Muslims are likely to face more struggles and poorer access to healthcare as most people from BAME background do. The challenges that BAME staff face in the NHS is steadily getting worse; in 2021 figures were published in the NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard report which stated that it is now 1.77 times more likely for a white staff member to get a role within the NHS compared to a BAME colleague. This is up from 1.46 a few years ago. At BIMA, it is crucial that we keep advocating on behalf of BAME colleagues to address race inequality and protect staff from mistreatment at work. The pressure that colleagues are facing at work is horrendous and we know that it can get overwhelming at times. Ultimately however, working in healthcare is also extremely rewarding; we are working to save peoples' lives.

Muslim patients, who are more likely to be BAME, also suffer disproportionately compared to the rest of the UK population, with 24% of Muslims aged 50 years or over reporting poor or very poor health which is twice that of the national average (as shown in the MCB report published in 2015). This is concerning and this is why public health awareness in our communities is so vital.

The work that BIMA does in mosques, community centres and other places where Muslims meet must be increased and the message that a healthy body leads to a healthy soul must be effectively communicated.

The prophet PBUH once said "Allah loves that when one of you does something, you do it well" and that is a mantra we must stick to whilst we go about our jobs.

With morale understandably so low and people feeling undervalued, this hadith is particularly important to bear in mind. Whilst we work to change the system, we must also keep on doing our utmost for our patients.

Finally, *Alhamdulillah*, it was also a pleasure to see so many of you in person again after the many lockdowns and restrictions that Covid imposed upon us. The recent Conference in November was the first face to face large meeting of BIMA members for a few years and it was energising to see so many new faces, and a brand new senior leadership team elected too at the AGM. For an organisation that has only recently celebrated its 9th anniversary, it is truly a proud moment. Congratulations to the new elected BIMA council and to the new president Dr Salman Waqar.

Very best wishes,

Wassalam.

Dr Sharif Kaf Al-Ghazal
JBIMA, Editor in Chief