



## Consortium of Local Medical Committees

449-451 Garstang Road (Ambulance Service HQ)

Broughton, Preston, PR3 5LN

Tel: 01772 863806

05 May 2020

### Relative Risks from COVID – 19 for people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds (BAME)

We have all become aware over the last few weeks of an increasing number of deaths amongst health care workers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. Whilst every death from COVID 19 is a tragedy it has become obvious that a larger proportion than we would have expected come from BAME backgrounds.

Statistics that have been collected nationally by Public Health England have now confirmed that there is a real issue here. No reasons for this phenomenon have yet been found although urgent research is ongoing.

This must be very worrying for our colleagues from such backgrounds and we must do all we can to reassure them and minimise any risk to which they may be exposed. People from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds make up 44% of the medical workforce and in some areas of the North West the proportion is much higher.

Pending more definitive guidance coming out as a greater understanding of the issues develops the LMC would recommend the following approach:

Practices should be supported to have thorough, sensitive and comprehensive conversations with members of the practice team from a BAME background. They should identify any existing underlying health conditions that may increase the risks for them in undertaking their frontline roles, in any capacity. Most importantly, the conversations should also, on an ongoing basis, consider the feelings of BAME colleagues, particularly with regard to their safety and their mental health.

Practices should risk-assess staff at potentially greater risk and make appropriate arrangements accordingly. Practices should consider how they can do this and take action to protect members of their team.

The first thing for all workers is to stay safe. The vast majority of patient interactions are now done remotely and that is likely to remain the case for some time. Any patients that are seen, will require the health care workers to wear appropriate PPE. Even when seeing patients who are asymptomatic of a potential COVID infection but need to be seen for a non COVID condition, they should still be seen in a clean environment with appropriate PPE worn by the health care worker and the patient. (usually a mask)

As we learn more about this and can understand the true level of increased risk for our BAME colleagues, we will be communicating with all our members. Until this is possible we ask that all doctors and their staff stay safe, don't take any risks and follow robust protocols for infection control and use of PPE.

Peter Higgins, Chief Executive