

Kemi Badenoch MP  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Equalities)

*By email*

10 June 2020

Dear Minister,

As you know, pharmacy staff are making a vital contribution to the NHS response during COVID-19 and are showing extraordinary dedication to supporting patient care.

The Public Health England report on 'Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19' recognised that people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Pharmacy teams and service users are understandably concerned by these findings.

While the report was a first step to re-stating the challenge, in the absence of any clear recommendations or actions, we would welcome a discussion with you on how the Government now plans to support BAME pharmacists and team members working on the frontline.

At the time of writing, five pharmacy team members have died with COVID-19. Four of them from BAME backgrounds. This has caused great sadness in the profession, as well as questions about how teams can be protected.

We welcomed your commitment to work with individuals and organisations within communities to protect lives in this pandemic. With 43% of registered pharmacists from a BAME community, we would urge you to engage with the pharmacy profession to bring about real change to support and protect our workforce.

A first step from the PHE report must be to ensure robust risk assessment and protection is in place for BAME staff along with other vulnerable groups, such as staff with existing health conditions. The pharmacy profession can also play a key role supporting vulnerable populations and reducing health inequalities.

The past few weeks have highlighted the longstanding issue of discrimination experienced by people from BAME backgrounds, in the UK as well as around the world. COVID-19 has also shone a spotlight on the urgent need to tackle health inequalities facing certain communities. These are collective challenges that need leadership at the highest levels and not something that any one community can fix by itself.

There are also wider questions about how we encourage inclusion and diversity across the health service, promoting equality of opportunity, and supporting people from more diverse backgrounds into NHS leadership roles. The RPS has been working on an Inclusion and Diversity strategy which will be launching soon.

As we begin to look at how the health service will need to adapt in future, it is vital that all pharmacy teams are included in support for the workforce to deliver frontline care safely. With continued pressure on staff and the need to boost retention, this should include funding for occupational health for all pharmacy colleagues delivering NHS services.



Patron:  
Her Majesty The Queen  
Chief Executive:  
Paul Bennett FRPharmS

President:  
Sandra Gidley FRPharmS  
England Board Chair:  
Claire Anderson FRPharmS  
Scotland Board Chair:  
Jonathan Burton MBE FRPharmS  
Wales Board Chair:  
Suzanne Scott-Thomas FRPharmS

We have welcomed the engagement from the NHS during the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to ensure that pharmacy continues to be part of these discussions, supporting the workforce so they can continue looking after all our communities across the country.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Claire Anderson', with a long vertical stroke extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Prof Claire Anderson FRPharmS  
Chair, English Pharmacy Board  
Royal Pharmaceutical Society

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elsy Gómez Campos', with a large, stylized initial 'E' and a horizontal line extending to the left.

Elsy Gómez Campos  
President  
UK Black Pharmacists Association

Cc: Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for England