

Jane Hutt MS
Deputy Minister and Chief Whip
Welsh Government

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. We have welcomed the commitment of the Welsh Government to supporting the profession during the pandemic in coping with unprecedented challenges.

We are aware that the Welsh Government has recognised that people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19. We welcome the establishment of the BAME expert advisory group to lead on this important agenda in Wales and are also supportive of the recent launch of the all-Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool.

I am sure you will appreciate that with 43% of registered pharmacists across Great Britain having BAME backgrounds, pharmacy teams are understandably concerned by the prevalence of COVID-19 among the BAME community. The recent findings of the Public Health England report on 'Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19' have increased anxieties among the profession.

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

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.

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. We welcome the recently agreed access for pharmacists to the *Health for Health Professionals Wales* service in Wales and ask that this support continues. With continued pressure on staff and the need to boost retention while coping with the challenges and anxieties of COVID-19, support services such as these and funding for occupational health for all pharmacy colleagues delivering NHS services will become ever more important.



Given the concerns across the BAME community of the pharmacy workforce, we would welcome a discussion with you and assurances about how the Welsh Government plans to support BAME pharmacists and team members working on the frontline.

Yours sincerely,



Suzanne Scott-Thomas
Chair, RPS Welsh Pharmacy Board



Elsy Campos
President, UK Black Pharmacists Association

cc. Vaughan Gething MS, Minister for Health and Social Services

Andrew Evans, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for Wales