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Briefing

The Health Effects of Racism on Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Nurses and the Early Onset of Retirement

Confronting Inequality: Celebrating Diversity
The Health Effects of Racism on Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Nurses and the Early Onset of Retirement

Sabir I. Giga and Uduak Archibong

Background

Whilst many attempts have been made to increase the recruitment, retention and advancement of black and minority ethnic people in the NHS over the last several decades, slow progress has been made in achieving this goal. In particular, there is little evidence of the quality of the working lives of BME people and the impact negative experiences, such as racism, have had on individual and organisational health. The Centre for Inclusion and Diversity, University of Bradford was commissioned to review published and unpublished literature including scientific journals, statistics, and national and international reports in order to highlight research gaps related to the:

a. Health effects of racism on BME nurses
b. Relationship between negative experiences and premature retirement.

Methodology

A multi-dimensional approach was utilised including a comprehensive literature review and consultation with experts. A project steering committee provided guidance and oversaw the direction, quality and efficiency of the research project.

Key Findings

- Although, there is a lack of direct evidence on the effects of racism on ill-health and early retirement, this report highlights some evidence of the extent and effects of negative experiences faced by BME employees working in the NHS.
- A number of studies have highlighted nursing as a high risk occupation in terms of exposure to stress, bullying and violence.
- Within nursing ethnic minority, female, trainees, the young and short-term contract staff are at high risk of physical and psychological violence.
- Furthermore, hierarchical power differentials and numeric minority status are also risk factors of bullying and harassment from colleagues.
- BME staff face a lack of progression opportunities within healthcare.
- A majority of nursing staff suggest they have experienced racism from colleagues as well as from the general public.
- Female BME nurses are at more risk and therefore are likely to suffer more from the negative effects of stress and bullying.
There is evidence to suggest that stress and bullying is likely to lead to detrimental physical and psychological effects. Almost half of all BME nursing staff would leave nursing if they had the opportunity to do so. As the evidence base is limited, further research is required to identify the causes and consequences of premature and ill-health retirement of BME nurses.

Recommendations

**NHS Policy and Practice**

- There is a need to develop more thorough monitoring systems for recruitment and retention data both from an organisational perspective as well as from an equality perspective.
- Clearer and inclusive policies are required, particularly in the areas of discrimination, stress prevention and bullying and harassment. Furthermore, although policies may be in place, BME groups should be adequately covered and not excluded.
- Policies should be followed through with practice and adopt a tougher stance on violence, harassment and discrimination.
- There is a need for more transparent progression and career development opportunities.
- Training and development opportunities should be inclusive with a consideration for giving individuals the time to participate, particularly within acute and busy settings.
- Career longevity should be encouraged and supported, particularly in relation to BME nurses coming to / past retirement age.

**Future Research**

- Further research is required to identify the causes and consequences of ill-health retirement amongst BME nurses. In order to do this and thereby build up an evidence base, we may need to make use of wider methodologies such as interviews, diaries, films, books and resource centres.
- There is a need for the development and evaluation of inclusive interventions. However, we suggest that it would be injudicious to take the step of implementing interventions in organisations without initially learning more of the context and extent of the problem. Researchers should make more use of racial background as a variable in stress, violence and bullying research, particularly when identifying risks.
- A deeper understanding of the compounding effects of a variety of multiple identities and intersections of diversity should be developed, such as race and age, as is the focus of this research.
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Full report available from:
Centre for Inclusion and Diversity
25 Trinity Road, Bradford
West Yorkshire BD5 0BB

Tel: +44 (0)1274 236347
Fax: +44 (0)1274 236443
http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/health/research/cid/index.php
Email: diversityudy@bradford.ac.uk