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Doctors from ethnic minorities earn 7% less than white colleagues, report finds

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Discrimination against doctors from ethnic minorities begins early and continues throughout their careers, the first report of the Medical Workforce Race Equality Standard (MWRES) has found.¹

The standard is a set of indicators which uses data from a range of sources to expose ethnic disparities in the medical workforce. Sources include NHS Digital, the NHS staff survey, and the General Medical Council.

The report found that compared with the overall proportion of doctors in NHS trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), doctors from ethnic minorities are underrepresented in consultant, clinical director, and medical director roles and overrepresented in other grades and postgraduate training. In 2020, for example, 20% of medical directors were from an ethnic minority background, compared with 42% in NHS trusts and CCGs.

The report also found that on average, ethnic minority doctors earn 7% (£4310; €4974; \$5851) a year less than their white colleagues. The biggest gap is seen among consultants, with those from ethnic minorities earning on average £240 a year less than their white peers.

Even at the start of doctors' careers the report found disparities. Applicants from ethnic minorities are less likely to be accepted into medicine and dentistry training compared with white applicants.

Ethnic minority doctors also have lower pass rates compared with white doctors in postgraduate specialty examinations and this is true for both UK trained doctors and international medical graduates.

Commenting on the report's findings, Mala Rao, medical adviser to the MWRES implementation team and chair of the working group that developed the medical workforce indicators, said the report confirmed previous observations about race inequalities.

"The findings in the 2020 MWRES report confirm previous observations but the key advantage is that they bring together the findings across multiple dimensions, revealing the pervasiveness of racism and discrimination across every aspect of medical careers experience and progression," Rao said.

"NHS England, the medical royal colleges, the GMC, Health Education England, medical academia, and others cannot fail to recognise the need to work together to reverse this dismal picture and strive to show improvements in future years."

BMA council chair Chaand Nagpaul said the report highlights "the enormous gulf between the experiences of ethnic minority doctors compared with their white counterparts and the unacceptable level of discrimination that continues to permeate the medical profession."

He added, "It has also shone a light on the devastating scale and breadth at which ethnic minority doctors are being unfairly disadvantaged throughout their career, from training to appointment to representation in senior roles and higher incidences of bullying and harassment. There is clearly a need for systemic, wide scale change across the entire NHS as the government should be embarrassed and spurred to action by this report."

¹ Mahase E. New indicators will track doctors' careers to expose racism. *BMJ* 2020;370:m3659. doi: 10.1136/bmj.m3659 pmid: 32943425