NHS Race and Health Observatory conference: leaders give their views

Elisabeth Mahase

What do you think needs to change in health education?

Victor Adebowale, NHS Confederation chair and guest editor of *The BMJ*'s Racism in Medicine special issue ([bmj.com/racism-in-medicine](http://bmj.com/racism-in-medicine)): “As part of your initial training you need to spend time in the community, and it’s not an elective. I think you need to understand the people that you’re actually working with. You need to go to places where you might not normally engage, because then your assumptions are challenged and tested.”

Yvonne Coghill, NHS Race and Health Observatory adviser and former director of NHS England’s Workforce Race Equality Implementation Team: “This is about race and making sure that people from different ethnic groups have equal opportunities. We need to start thinking about building race into everything we do. Into the medical curriculum, into the nursing curriculum, but also into schools and nurseries. Across the board, we need to start educating people.”

Tinuke Awe and Clotilde Abe, co-founders of Five X More, a campaigning group aimed at tackling the inequalities in maternal health faced by black women and birthing people: “The medical curriculum should be more inclusive of conditions that affect black and minority ethnic people. For example, health professionals should be trained on how certain conditions present on darker skin.”

What change would you like to see in five years’ time?

Victor Adebowale: “Leadership. It doesn’t matter what colour you are, your job is to lead everyone everywhere all the time, not some people, somewhere, some of the time. You need to understand this stuff, and if you don’t then you’re not doing your job. I’d like to see that it’s part of all policy. It should not be possible to claim that the cancer programme is a success if black people are still reporting worse experiences and worse outcomes.

Yvonne Coghill: “We need to focus on child health and young people. As a board member of the Race and Health Observatory, one of the things I will be bringing up is how we actually start to work for young people and children as well as engaging more with communities. The key thing is to get more senior NHS leaders on board with this.”

Tinuke Awe and Clotilde Abe: “To see mortality and morbidity going down for black women in maternity services.”