Jeremy Hunt MP

Chair of Health Select Committee

House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

8th May 2020

Dear Mr Hunt

Our NHS Our Concern is a think tank of current NHS staff and likeminded supporters, whose purpose is to develop and promote efficiencies in the organisation and delivery of UK healthcare.

We are writing to you out of concern for our colleagues from BAME backgrounds and their current risk of severe illness and death due to COVID-19. We are grateful that the disproportionate risk to this group of staff has been recognized and that consideration is being given to how this risk can better managed.

We are hugely disappointed that the NHS plan to mitigate the risk to this group (as reported in the Health Service Journal) does not include urgent practical measures that are likely to have a very positive impact on outcomes for COVID-19 infection. In particular, we are asking that this plan includes serious consideration to addressing vitamin D deficiency in this group of staff, and indeed in patients from BAME backgrounds as well.

The evidence that supports the role of vitamin D in immune response is convincing and there is now emerging evidence that low levels of vitamin D may be linked to severe COVID-19 infection[[1]](#endnote-1). One thing that is common amongst all the risk factors identified so far, e.g. age, ethnicity, diabetes and co-morbidities is a deficiency of vitamin D. It is well known that people from BAME backgrounds are frequently deficient in vitamin D. We are asking that the UK Health Departments implement a policy of testing for vitamin D levels in the risk assessments for BAME staff. If testing is not possible, we are asking that the policy is to give vitamin D supplements to this staff group. We would also urge the Government to consider a programme of rapid research into the role of vitamin D in severe COVID-19 disease in a similar way to that for vaccines. We have enclosed a critique of current vitamin D guidelines in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic as further background information.

We ask that you give your urgent consideration to raising the need for vitamin D testing/supplements in your ministerial capacity, in support of BAME healthcare colleagues.

Yours sincerely

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | cid:B4F560C8-430F-44A5-B982-42D1713375A0 |
| Professor Parag Singhal  Consultant Endocrinologist | Dr Arun Baksi  Former Emeritus Consultant Physician  The Arun Baksi Centre for Diabetes and Endocrinology |

1. <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.05.01.20079376v1>  
    [↑](#endnote-ref-1)