

NHS risks losing its global reputation if it continues to overlook the expertise of 15% of its workforce, according to the Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET) in its latest [report](#).

There has been a 60% rise in the number of migrant doctors and nurses working in OECD countries over the last decade, and the UK is one of the major beneficiaries. Almost 1 in 7 NHS staff report a non-British nationality. And yet, the contributions diaspora staff within the NHS make to health globally continue to be overlooked and undervalued.

In the wake of the pandemic and a build back better agenda, the NHS must recognise the vital role its diaspora workforce play in strengthening health systems globally.

In the much-anticipated policy report, '[Experts in our Midst](#)', the Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET) argues that while the NHS is diverse, it is not necessarily inclusive and that the time has come to build a truly inclusive NHS that values the UK's diverse health and care workforce.

Ben Simms, CEO of THET, commented:

"In 2019, THET asked the question: how can the NHS save money and improve healthcare delivery, by studying the many innovations emerging in Africa and Asia? One answer was astonishing in its simplicity: In the NHS, we are surrounded by people with first-hand experiences of other health systems, so let's ask them. 'Experts in our Midst' grew from this and places a spotlight on the unconscious bias and racism that shape perceptions of Africa and Asia and the health professionals that do so much to benefit the UK. The report is both a celebration of the experience such diaspora staff bring, and a call to arms, a call to embrace the benefit of overcoming unconscious bias and racism so that we can benefit fully from what Africa and Asia has to teach us about achieving more, with less."

Following NHS England's [Workforce Race Equality Standards](#) Report that acknowledges 'the need for equality and inclusion to be intrinsic to everything we do in the NHS', Experts in our Midst argues that the time for change is now. No longer can we undervalue the expertise, knowledge and contributions diaspora members of the NHS' workforce make. As Navina Evans, Chief Executive of Health Education England, notes in the report:

"The pandemic amplified social injustice and inequality, but the pandemic didn't cause them, they were already there... Engaging and supporting colleagues from minority ethnic backgrounds and the diaspora has always been central to a stronger, fairer NHS."

Professor Mala Rao OBE, Medical Adviser, Workforce Race Equality Strategy Implementation Team, NHS England & Director, Ethnicity and Health Unit commented:

"As we begin to emerge from the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, this report is a timely reminder of the extraordinary contribution diaspora staff have made not only to deliver health care during this crises but throughout the life of the NHS. The report explores their role in and dedication to health care in the UK as well as the enormous contribution they make to global health. And it also lays bare the racism and discrimination which they have to overcome to accomplish these achievements."

As the UK seeks to address these barriers and inequalities, the NHS must acknowledge that the best systems are global systems capable of learning fast at a time of pandemic and crisis. Drawing upon global expertise and connections across borders, has made the NHS what it is today but only through open recognition and celebration of these experts will our health service continue to develop and improve.

ENDS

Notes to Editor

1. For further information or interviews please contact: charlotte.ashton@thet.org
2. About THET: THET is a global health organisation with a vision of a world where everyone has access to healthcare. For over 30 years we have been working to achieve this by training and educating health workers in Africa and Asia in partnership with organisations and volunteers from across the UK. Founded in 1988 by Professor Sir Eldryd Parry, we are the only UK charity with this focus. From reducing maternal deaths in Uganda to improving the quality of hospital care for injured children in Myanmar, we work to strengthen local health systems and build a healthier future for all. In the past ten years alone, THET has reached over 100,000 health workers across 31 countries in Africa and Asia in partnership with over 130 UK institutions.

