Ethnicity gap seen in London recruitment

EXCLUSIVE White doctors applying for medical posts in London are six times as likely to be offered a job as black applicants, new research shows.

The data, gathered after freedom of information requests, also show that white doctors are four times as likely to be successful as Asian candidates or those with a mixed ethnic background.

The figures were uncovered by Sheila Cunliffe, a senior human resources professional who works in workforce transformation across the NHS. She sent freedom of information requests to all 18 NHS acute care trusts in London asking for a breakdown by ethnicity for 2020-21 of the numbers of applicants for medical jobs, shortlisted candidates, and candidates offered positions. She has summarised her findings in an online report.

Twelve of the 18 trusts shared their full unredacted data with The BMJ. Across these trusts, 29% of white applicants were shortlisted, compared with 13% of black applicants, 14% of Asian applicants, and 15% of applicants of mixed ethnicity. Overall 7% of white applicants were offered jobs, compared with 1% of black applicants, 2% of Asian applicants, and 2% of applicants of mixed ethnicity.

Cunliffe said the findings were just one indicator of the barriers that applicants from ethnic minorities faced. “The racism some of these results point to will be replicated in the day-to-day experience of staff,” she said.

Cunliffe noted that the disparity was not due to a shortage of applicants, citing the example of Kingston Hospital Trust in south London, which received applications from more than 400 black candidates in 2020-21, yet no black doctor was offered a position at the trust that year.

A trust spokesperson said, “We continue to work to improve our recruitment and selection processes and are currently training 26 diversity champions from across all professional groups and services to ensure that all our applicants are interviewed by panels that have enhanced skills in equality and diversity.”

At Barts Health trust white applicants were 15 times as likely as black applicants to be offered a post as their black peers.