

UPDATE

BY DR VIVIENNE LYFAR-CISSÉ NATIONAL TRANSITIONAL LEAD

Personal Communication to Members

It seems like a long time since my last communication and much has happened during that time to make us proud as a Network. In spite of the many attempts by the “break away” group to de-rail the Network over the last six months not only did we celebrate our first anniversary conference on 16 September 2011 at the London Hilton Park Lane, but the feedback from the vast majority of delegates was that this was the best conference to date. Furthermore, for those delegates attending for the first time, including several presenters, the event clearly exceeded all expectations. The event also provided us with an opportunity to involve BME colleagues from other public sector bodies and it was great to have representation from both the National and Metropolitan Black Police Association, the Black Society of Lawyers and BME Networks for the BBC, the Probation Service and the Home Office.

In light of the above I would like to take this opportunity to thank you our members for supporting this event and all the speakers and panellists for making this event such a success. In addition I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr Robert Beckford for being such an excellent moderator and to Tony Millar our expert patient whose standing ovation clearly reflected how much he was appreciated by all in attendance.

If you were unfortunate to miss this event then I am pleased to let you know we have put together a conference report with all the presentations to enable you to have an insight into the discussions that took place on the day. Please find attached a copy of the conference report for your perusal.

On 4 October I was invited to give a presentation on “Reverse Commissioning” at the Imperial as One event entitled Equality, Practice and Innovation at Imperial College. I felt most humbled to be included on the agenda with Professor Lord Ara Darzi and Professor Lord Robert Winston. It is evident that reverse commissioning as an effective process to engage our BME communities is an important initiative that is receiving much interest from various NHS organisations. As the beneficiaries of the race equality duty it is extremely important that we offer effective solutions to the current failure of the NHS to deliver on its legal obligations concerning race equality for BME patients as well as BME staff. It was also a real privilege for me to be able to support both Denise Wootten and Dave Corbin at their Black History Month event for Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust, given their very public support for me over the last 6-8 months. I look forward to attending other events for Black History Month later this month.

As you are aware it is important that we seek to work with other organisations to enable us to deliver on the aims and objectives of the NHS BME Network. I am pleased that we are in discussion with a number of organisations to see how best we can establish effective partnerships. As a result of these discussions I am pleased that the General Medical Council has agreed to hold a roundtable event

with the NHS BME Network on 25 November to discuss the concerns regarding our BME medical doctors.

Finally, I trust you will recall that members of the “break away” group accused me of fraud and reported me to the NHS Counter Fraud Agency. The investigation has been completed and the outcome is **“there is no evidence of wrong doing”**. The Agency will now submit a report to my Trust and I will request for this to be made available to all members on receipt. I am currently seeking advice on the best way to deal with this matter and will keep you posted.

The next few months are extremely important for the Network as we seek to establish an elected Executive Committee to oversee the affairs of the Network. It is an understatement if I were to say this year has been a most challenging time for me and the Network and with your support we have weathered the storm to date. Let’s continue to stand steadfast in the knowledge that this agenda is too important for us to become distracted. Let’s remain diligent and focussed so that together we can deliver on our aims and objectives in this time of austerity.

1. Fraud Investigation Outcome

As you know over the last few months members of the “break away” group have communicated concerns of financial impropriety by me with regards to the way in which the finances of the NHS BME Network is managed. I trust you will also recall that on 4 August this year Amelia circulated the email below to all members to inform you that Nolan Victory of NHS Brent had informed the Finance Director at my Trust that both he and Isaac John of Ashford and St Peter’s Hospital NHS Trust would be reporting me to the NHS Counter Fraud.

I have been informed by Philip Major, NHS Local Counter Fraud Specialist Manager that he has looked into the concerns raised regarding the financial arrangements at the BME Network and **“have found no evidence of wrong doing”**. He is currently completing his report for submission to the Finance Director and on receipt I will ask for the report to be made available for circulation to all members.

May I take this opportunity to thank all the many members who contacted me to express your disappointment and shock at these events and to encourage me to stand firm. It is important to remember that Nehemiah was accused of all manner of things, but he did not allow himself to be distracted knowing that the “truth will always set you free”.

Given the huge number of false allegations that have been circulated about me over the last eight months with the obvious intention of defaming my character I am now in the process of seeking advice to see how best these false allegations against me can be addressed. As one such adviser said to me most recently “you are quite right Vivienne you cannot stop a person from saying things about you, but you can stop them from telling lies about you”.

From: Tharme, Amelia <Amelia.Tharme@bsuh.nhs.uk>

To: Tharme, Amelia <Amelia.Tharme@bsuh.nhs.uk>

Sent: Thu Aug 04 16:10:27 2011

Subject: False Allegations of Fraud-Communication from Dr Vivienne Lyfar-Cissé

SENT ON BEHALF OF DR VIVIENNE LYFAR-CISSÉ

Dear Members/Colleagues

As you are aware over the last few months the "break away" group has sought to discredit my name and my integrity and given the allegations against me are false I have chosen not to engage with the individuals concerned. More recently I have been informed by the Chairman of a NHS Trust that one of the members of the group has dissociated himself from the group and has informed them of this fact.

In the last couple of weeks Isaac John and Nolan Victory have contacted my CEO and Finance Director respectively to ask for the NHS BME Network account to be frozen given their concerns with the way in which the account is being managed. As you are aware the account is managed by BSUH NHS Trust and for your convenience I attach the letter from the Head of Financial Strategy, which was circulated more recently outlining the management process.

*The request to freeze the account **has not** been granted by BSUH NHS Trust, however the Development Adviser for the Trust has advised Isaac John to report any concerns he may have about the management of the NHS BME Network account to the NHS Counter Fraud Agency. Nolan Victory has informed the Trust that this is their intention and the Trust is waiting to be contacted by the Agency. Once the investigation has commenced I will let you know and of course I will also ask the Trust to make available the outcome of the investigation for your perusal.*

In light of the above I can only seek to reassure you that the reason I asked BSUH NHS Trust to manage the finance accounts for the Network is to ensure that our finances are managed correctly at all times.

Like Nehemiah we must continue to build in the times of adversity, because the agenda is just too important for us to be distracted-this is our time of restoration.

Your Lead
Vivienne

Dr Vivienne Lyfar-Cissé
Transitional Lead
NHS BME Network

2. Roundtable Event with General Medical Council-25 November 2011

We know from available evidence that our medical doctors have been on the receiving end of much racial discrimination within their profession. You may recall that Dr Vijay Kumar and I published a joint response in the British Medical Journal earlier in the year concerning this matter. I am pleased to report that the General Medical Council has agreed to hold a Roundtable event with the NHS BME Network on 25 November to discuss these matters. Please find attached the flyer for this event for your perusal.

3. Reverse Commissioning

As you are aware reverse commissioning is a tool which we have put forward to better engage our BME communities. Although the Flagship project is being undertaken by Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust I am also pleased to let you know that we are in discussion with a few NHS Trusts and a National Charity who have all expressed an interest in participating in the project. I will endeavour to keep you posted of the outcome of these discussions.

I trust you will also be acutely aware that the Equality Delivery System (EDS) requires all NHS organisations to engage BME communities as part of their assessment process. Furthermore, we are informed that the views of the communities will take precedent should there be a discrepancy with regards to where the organisation stands with regards to the delivery of race equality. May I encourage you all to be acutely aware of this fact given NHS organisations will be required to submit the evidence of this engagement early next year.

4. Meetings-NHS BME Network

- **Regional Meeting-NHS BME South of England**

I trust you are aware that the 10 Strategic Health Authority (SHA) regions with the exception of London have been reconfigured and it is important that we reorganise our working relationships to take these changes into account. I am pleased to report that the first meeting of the NHS BME South of England (South East Coast, South Central and South West regions) will take place on:

Date: Monday 24 October
Time: 12.30 to 16.30
Venue: Princess Royal Hospital
Lewes Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex RH16 4EX

- **National Meeting**

The next meeting of the NHS BME Network will take place on:

Date: Friday 11 November

Time: 09.30 to 16.30

Venue: SAF Building
Imperial College
London

I would like to encourage as many members as possible to attend this event to enable us to plan for the elections of the Network and discussion of the constitution before wider consultation with all members.

Please find attached the agenda for the meeting on 24 October. We will endeavour to make available the agenda for 11 November 2011 in due course. If you would like to attend either of these events please can you contact Amelia (amelia.tharme@bsuh.nhs.uk) to register your interest as soon as possible

Please note: The meeting scheduled to take place on **21 October 2011 has now been cancelled.**

5. Elections

As you are aware we are aiming to hold the elections by the close of 2011 and it is important that we consult you our members concerning our constitution. I would like to apologise for the delay in making the constitution available. This is due to the fact that the external individual that we have engaged to write our constitution (who also wrote the constitution for the South East Coast BME Network) was subject to a medical scare more recently. I am pleased that things are now being resolved and she has reassured us that the constitution should be available for our meeting on 11 November after which we can circulate more widely to all members for comment. May I take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your patience and to thank those of you who have already expressed an interest in standing for election.

6. Website

Given the number of enquiries from members more recently may i take this opportunity to remind you that our website address is as follows:www.nhsbmenetwork.org.uk

Thanking you again for your continued support

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Vivienne Lyfar-Cissé'.

Dr Vivienne Lyfar-Cissé
Transitional Lead
NHS BME Network
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