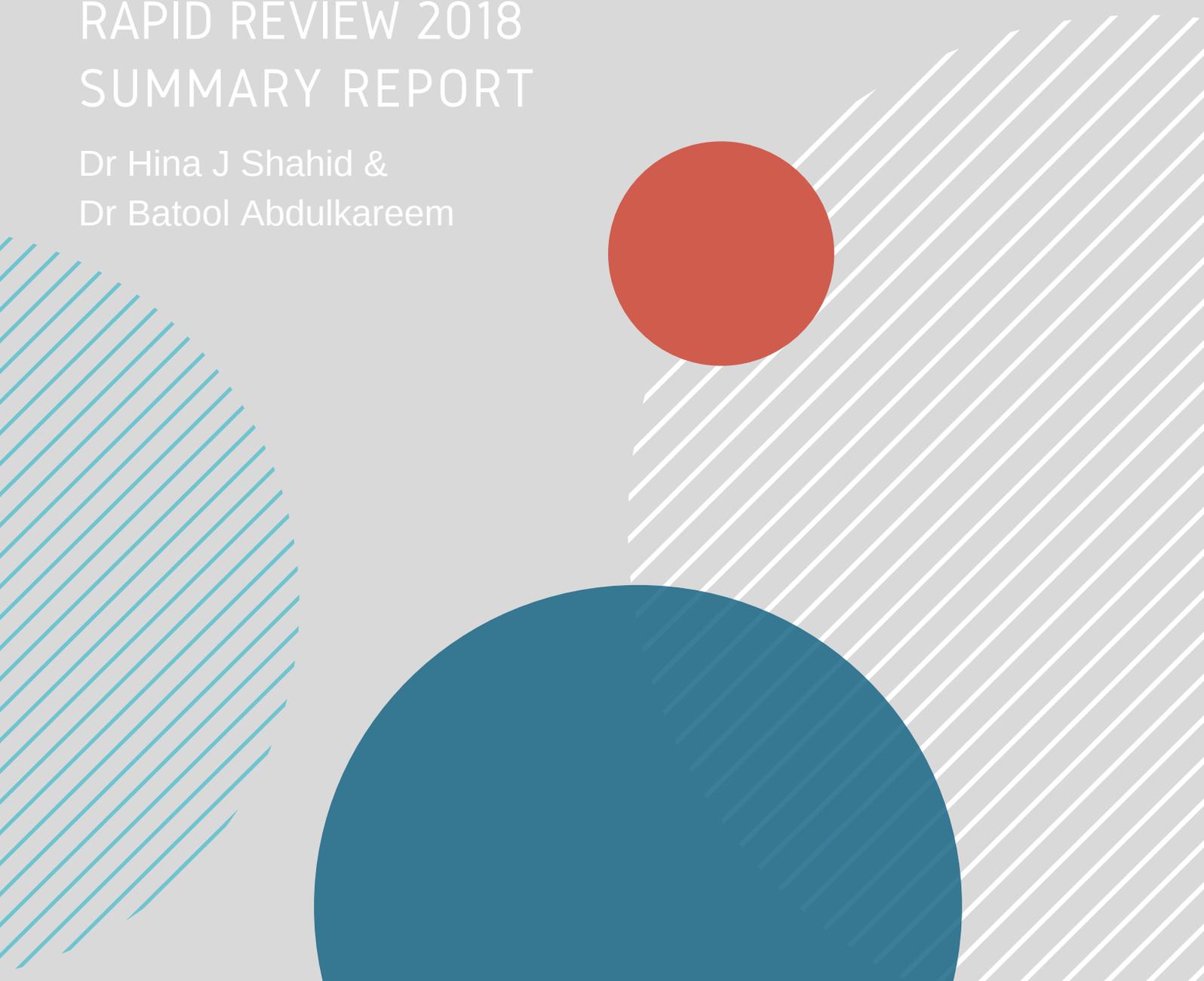




THE TRIPLE PENALTY: MUSLIM DOCTORS IN THE NHS

RAPID REVIEW 2018
SUMMARY REPORT

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BACKGROUND

The NHS Constitution embodies core values of respect, dignity, compassion and inclusion but recent evidence demonstrates that little progress has been made to address discrimination against groups with protected characteristics. The King's Fund report in 2015 highlighted that people from all religions experience discrimination on the basis of their faith, but this is by far the highest amongst Muslims. International research on Muslim doctors working in Western countries has highlighted the multiple barriers and prejudices they face. However, research in the UK has focused almost exclusively on racial discrimination with limited information on doctors of faith.

In 2018 the Muslim Doctors Association (MDA) conducted a rapid review to explore religious discrimination in the NHS. This followed the initial GMC ruling on the Dr Hadiza Bawa-Garba case and access to GMC data which demonstrated higher complaints, fitness to practice investigations and more serious sanctions against BAME doctors. The MDA was also contacted by Muslim health professionals facing difficulties at work due to their faith.

**“NHS staff from all religions experience discrimination on the basis of their faith, but this is by far the highest amongst Muslims”
-King's Fund 2015**

The aims of the rapid review were to assess doctors' perceptions of the factors influencing the ruling on the Dr Hadiza Bawa-Garba, assess the prevalence of religious discrimination, and explore experiences of religious discrimination amongst female Muslim doctors working in the NHS.

FINDINGS

Methods

MDA conducted a literature review, including grey literature and media reporting of Muslim doctors, a cross-sectional survey and 1:1 interviews. 302 doctors participated in two online survey questionnaires (n= 145 and 157) and 4 female Muslim doctors participated in short 1:1 interviews to describe their experiences of discrimination.

Results

In the survey 37% (30-44%) of the respondents were Muslim, 24% (15%-39%) had experienced discrimination at work of which 74% (72-76%) were Muslim. Experiences of discrimination reported in interviews included negative stereotypes, bullying and harassment, prejudice from colleagues, exclusion, stress, negative wellbeing and burnout. Regarding the Dr Hadiza Bawa-Garba case, 26.5% (26-27%) of doctors believed that religious discrimination played a role, although not as a single factor, in both applying public pressure on the GMC and the GMC's decision to erase Dr Bawa-Garba from the register and 37.5% (37-38%) believed that gender, race and religion combined were driving factors.

Discussion

There is growing concern around discrimination faced by Muslim doctors on multiple levels which ranges from unconscious bias to institutional factors affecting personal wellbeing, team dynamics and career progression. Experience of discrimination is reinforced by the intersection of gender, race and religion. This is consistent with “The Triple Penalty” observed in other sectors and institutions. Islamophobia is on the rise and there are suggestions that the initial ruling on the case of Dr Hadiza Bawa-Garba was influenced by anti-Muslim sentiments from right-wing media. However, limited data with a small sample size, missing data, unlinked samples and sample characteristics make it difficult to draw definitive conclusions on the scale of religious discrimination. Further research needs to be conducted in order to better understand the factors creating and sustaining religious discrimination, and importantly, devise appropriate responses and solutions to create fairer, safer and more inclusive and supportive working conditions for Muslim health professionals.

THE FIGURES

24%

EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION

74%

EXPERIENCING RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION WERE MUSLIM

"Assumptions that I will not be able to do my job"

"The eye rolling from the nurse and seniors"

"The lack of friendliness during induction"

ASSUMPTIONS
STEREOTYPES
HARASSMENT
ISOLATION
UNDERMINING
STRESS

"Assumptions I don't speak English, don't know the system, am not in a training programme"

"My colleague would deliberately bleep me several times when I went to pray"

"The surprised reaction that I am a normal human being"