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Black and minority ethnic communities and dementia: Where are we now?

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Dementia is recognized as a worldwide health priority but research on dementia in general is poorly funded. Little is known about its relative prevalence in black and minority ethnic populations, although there is a growing body of evidence that the Black African-Caribbean community in the UK has a higher prevalence of vascular dementia than other communities. Although the National Dementia Strategy provides strong policy recommendations, there is a need to ensure that these are implemented appropriately, and take into account the information and support needs of black and minority ethnic communities. Prevalence of dementia in some communities in the UK has been significantly underestimated. Dementia is misunderstood and highly stigmatized in many UK black and minority ethnic communities. There are organizations that have developed good practice in working with black and minority ethnic communities, but there needs to be a more developed structure to share the learning from good practice. There should be a vision of a culturally appropriate approach to the dementia pathway that starts from raising awareness, leads to facilitating early diagnosis and lasts into appropriate end-of-life care. An economic case could be developed for financing improvements in 'living well' with dementia for people in black and minority ethnic communities, with targeted awareness raising and improvements in community based support.

Biography

Truswell David has worked in adult community based mental health services for over thirty years in the UK developing services focused on people with complex care needs and enduring mental health problems in a career spanning the not-for-profit sector, local authority services and the National Health Service. From 2005 to 2008, he led the NHS Delivering Race Equality initiative in the Central and North West London Mental Health Foundation Trust (one of the largest NHS Trusts in the UK). From 2009 to 2011 he was the Dementia Implementation Lead for London Health Programmes. He is also concentrated on Digital Technology in Mental Health, Use of social media in dementia and mental health support, Mental Health and the Criminal Justice System. He is a Chair of Board of Trustees PLIAS (Prison Liaison Information and Advisory Service) and is an Independent writer, advisor and blogger on the impact of dementia in Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

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