

## JBIMA Editorial

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### Assalamo Alaikom

In light of the recent review on the state of the NHS, it is worth us taking a step back and considering our contributions and input to the service.

Approximately 10% of doctors in the NHS are [Muslim](#) and there is growing recognition of the role that Muslim doctors and other health workers play within it. The service is clearly in a difficult state, and Lord Darzi's words in his review that "the NHS is in critical condition" is striking though perhaps unsurprising. Patients are struggling to see a GP, community waiting lists have soared to 1 million with 80% being children and young people, and A&E is in a truly awful state with long waits contributing to approximately 14,000 additional deaths per year.

A lot will need to be done to improve the NHS for patients, and just as importantly, its staff too. After all, as the saying goes, you can't pour from an empty cup. Staff have to be looked after to ensure that patients are looked after too.

The founding principles of the NHS are in line with our values as Muslims. It is free at the point of care and is funded by everyone through general taxation. We all pay for it; it belongs to us all. Healthcare is a basic human right and an essential pillar of any civilized society.

Without adequate healthcare, citizens will never be able to flourish and treatable diseases will spread misery. No matter your background, your gender, your religion and your financial status, if you need medical attention, you will receive it free of charge. We would go further and suggest that even a person's immigration status should have no bearing on using the NHS for free at the point of need. As the prophet PBUH once said, *there is no superiority of Arab over non-Arab*. We treat everyone with respect and dignity; we are all Allah's creation.

Whilst the NHS is part of the UK's national fabric, it must be protected. Moving towards a service which is focused on prevention and not just cure, investing in

crumbling buildings and better utilising digital systems will help ensure it is ready for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The voice of staff and patients should be better channelled to drive change too. The UK has an ageing population and the next decades need new thinking and innovation.

There are real challenges for Muslims within the NHS, both patients and staff. Staff have at times faced discrimination within the NHS with instances of micro aggressions and institutional racism still prevalent. There is a real lack of Muslim leaders and decision-makers in the NHS, and progression to the highest echelons is still a huge challenge. Patient outcomes in areas with higher numbers of Muslims are also poorer, with hospitals in said areas being more likely to be under-resourced. Allah says in the Quran "*We have sent you 'O Prophet' only as a mercy for the whole world*" (Surat Al Anbiya'a – Ayah 107) and with that, we follow the example of the Prophet PBUH and apply it to our lives; in this case rising to the challenge and working with colleagues to help repair the NHS.

As we think about the issues the NHS faces and the hard work required to overcome them, we must at least be grateful that there is a functioning healthcare system in this country. Our brothers and sisters in Gaza have been suffering the consequences of a blockade for over 2 decades and a devastating war for almost a year.

According to Dr Ghassan Abu Sitta who spoke at the BIMA Conference in the University of Warwick recently, as of the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, 36 hospitals have been destroyed in Gaza since last October and more than 800 healthcare professionals have been killed. The healthcare situation is apocalyptic but it is not being spoken widely enough about. As healthcare professionals, we have a duty to ask how we can lessen and ease suffering, and when we cannot, how we can raise awareness of it so other can lessen the suffering.

The Palestinian people are trapped they have nowhere to go. There is a danger that after a year of the Israeli

invasion, people begin to forget and dismiss the fewer news stories coming out of Gaza. This is a mistake.

We still have a responsibility to advocate for an immediate ceasefire and to help them rebuild their healthcare system. May Allah ease the pain of our brothers and sisters.

May Allah always keep us on the right path. May He always bless us and grant us success, and May He accept all that we do in his service.

*Wassalam.*

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