

Editorial paper finds COVID-19 death among doctors in the UK is mostly in over-60s

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An editorial paper has reviewed evidence and found that most of the UK deaths in doctors from COVID-19 are aged over 60.

The paper, published in the *British Journal of General Practice*, was co-authored by Professor Azeem Majeed, Imperial College London, and colleagues, including Dr. Bharat Pankhania, Senior Clinical Lecturer at the University of Exeter Medical School.

The finding that deaths in doctors is mostly in those aged over 60 raises concerns about the government's campaign to encourage retired doctors to return to NHS Roles.

Dr. Pankhania said: "The data from the Office for National Statistics shows that people from ethnic minorities as well as others who fit a geographical and poverty profile have a higher risk of [death](#) following a COVID-19. It is therefore important to profile ALL [healthcare staff](#) and thereafter allocate suitable jobs for them, according to their risk profile. Most deaths amongst doctors have occurred in doctors aged 60 years and over.

Therefore, it is important to not deploy the returned retired and older doctors in face to face clinical roles. There are many other important roles they can fulfil instead.

"As people with COVID-19 infection can be infective before symptoms start, all [healthcare workers](#) who undertake face- to-face clinical work are potentially at risk of infection. It is therefore important to treat all patients as potentially infected and infectious and thus proper PPE should be available in all clinical areas. Patients may be infectious and infect staff and or other patients."

Reflecting that over 100 health and care workers have died so far from COVID-19 they point out that more deaths are inevitable unless [urgent action](#) is taken to reduce the risk.

It is particularly striking that nearly all doctors who have died have been from [ethnic minority](#) groups. Staff are worried, compounded by the problems many have experienced in obtaining suitable personal protective equipment and the changing guidance.

Research from China shows that when high specification PPE is worn (such as FFP3 masks, face visors and gowns), and where staff are trained to use this PPE correctly, COVID-19 infections and deaths in healthcare workers both fall substantially.

Researchers conclude that: "we need to better protect the health of doctors and other [healthcare workers](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic."

The paper is titled "Protecting the health of doctors during the COVID-19 pandemic."

More information: Azeem Majeed et al. Protecting the health of doctors during the COVID-19 pandemic, *British Journal of General Practice* (2020). [DOI: 10.3399/bjgp20X709925](https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp20X709925)

Provided by University of Exeter

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