

Pay of NHS doctors varies by ethnic group

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Data published by *The BMJ* today reveal some differences in median basic pay between white and black and minority ethnic (BME) hospital doctors employed by the NHS in England.

While the gap is small for nearly all grades and types of doctor, a larger gap exists among consultants, with white consultants earning around an extra £4,644 per year compared with BME consultants.

Author John Appleby, Chief Economist at the Nuffield Trust, says although the lack of a significant pay gap for most doctor grades is encouraging, the differences at consultant level warrant further investigation and explanation.

His findings are based on basic pay data extracted from the NHS Electronic Staff Record for the month of December 2017, for [doctors](#) in England directly employed by the NHS, coupled with doctors' self identified ethnicity category.

In England, a higher proportion of NHS [staff](#) identify as belonging to a minority ethnic group compared to the population as a whole (20% in December 2017 vs 15% based on the 2011 census). For NHS doctors (excluding GPs), however, the proportion of BME staff varies from 37% for foundation year 1 doctors to 60% for specialty doctors.

Appleby shows that for nearly all grades and types of doctors the gap in median basic pay is small, ranging from close to zero for foundation year 2 doctors to 1%, favouring BME associate specialist doctors.

However, a larger gap exists among consultants: the median basic pay for white consultants is 4.9% higher than for BME consultants. This is equivalent to additional basic pay in December 2017 of £387—or, scaled up, around £4,644 a year—for white consultants.

A more detailed breakdown shows that median basic pay for white consultants is higher than all other ethnic groups—varying from around 3.5% higher than black/black British consultants, to over 6% higher than mixed or dual heritage consultants.

But Appleby points out that it is one thing to identify pay gaps between staff, another to explain them.

As with the gender pay gap, the ethnic pay gap among consultants will be driven by several factors, he writes.

Part of the explanation may be differences in the age profile of white and BME consultants, he says. "White consultants tend to be older, and if age is taken as a proxy for experience, and experience is positively linked to remuneration, then we would expect to see some difference in pay."

"However, there will be other explanations too—some warranted, others not so much. These, as with the gender pay gap, are worth investigating further," he concludes.

More information: Data Briefing: Ethnic pay gap among NHS doctors, *BMJ*, www.bmj.com/content/362/bmj.k3586

Provided by British Medical Journal

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