Places of worship can be health promotion spaces for faith-based black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities

Parveen Ali
Health Sciences School, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

Commentary
This study focused on the importance of the places of worship as public health settings where health messages can be transmitted to individuals and communities. Faith connects many individuals, families and communities together. Likewise, places of worship—where members are able to practice their faith—play a very important role in the lives of many individuals and communities. In the UK context, this relates to BAME communities which are often difficult to identify and engage with in research and health promotion activities.

Places of worship also bring people from diverse backgrounds together regularly and therefore can be a good place to facilitate public engagement and disseminate health promotion-related messages. As the authors highlight, such an advantage of places of worship also helps in realising that health behaviours are affected by many different factors and that biomedical settings such as hospitals and primary care centres are not the only option to influence health behaviour. In fact, faith and religious belief can be used effectively to help people cope with and manage health conditions.

Religious leaders can play a very important role in helping health and social care professionals in engaging with the communities, disseminating and championing health promotion activities. Places of worship are often not seen this way. However, if public health professionals want to engage with wider communities to ensure their involvement in the mainstream health services, they need to understand the importance of such places. In addition, they need to find ways to engage with religious leaders, considering their influential position, and places of worship.

Competing interests
None declared.

Provenance and peer review
Commissioned; internally peer reviewed.

© Author(s) (or their employer(s)) 2021. No commercial re-use. See rights and permissions. Published by BMJ.

ORCID ID
Parveen Ali http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7839-8130

References