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1 **Ethnicity and type 2 diabetes in the UK**

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7 **Novelty statement**

8 The prevalence of type 2 diabetes (T2DM) is alarmingly high among ethnic minority groups in the
9 United Kingdom (UK), about 3-5 times higher than White-British population. Particularly striking is
10 the earlier onset of T2DM, which occurs some 10-12 years younger, with a significant proportion of
11 cases being diagnosed before the age of 40 years.

12 A wealth of literature exists aiming to understand how genetic, physiological, socio-economic and
13 lifestyle factors contribute to ethnic inequalities in T2DM. Much of this evidence is drawn from the
14 United States of America; the current review focuses on the UK context, in which there are distinctions
15 in the demographic, social and healthcare system factors that contribute to the presentation and
16 outcomes of T2DM.

17 This review highlights a number of ways in which ethnicity impacts on the pathophysiology,
18 presentation, complications and management of T2DM. Importantly it draws upon evidence from UK
19 cohorts and recognises distinctions between UK cohorts and those residing in other regions. The focus
20 on the UK context aims to provide practitioners with a greater understanding of T2DM in ethnic
21 minority groups.

22

23

24 **Abstract**

25 Type 2 diabetes (T2DM) is a major UK public health priority. Among ethnic minority communities the
26 prevalence is alarmingly high, about 3-5 times higher than White-British population. Particularly
27 striking is the earlier onset of T2DM, which occurs some 10-12 years younger, with a significant
28 proportion of cases being diagnosed before the age of 40 years. This review focuses on the UK context
29 and T2DM in adult populations, exploring the available evidence regarding the complex interplay of
30 biological, lifestyle, social, clinical and healthcare system factors that are known to drive these
31 disparities.

32

33 ***Introduction***

34 It is well documented that ethnic minority groups in the United Kingdom (UK) and worldwide suffer
35 disproportionately from diabetes compared to non-minority populations (1, 2). This review will focus
36 on type 2 diabetes (T2DM) as it is the burden of this disease that is most evident amongst ethnic minority
37 populations, and it will focus on the UK context in which demographic, social and healthcare system
38 factors contribute to the presentation and outcomes of T2DM being distinct to that of other regions.

39 ***Ethnic Diversity in the United Kingdom***

40 The UK population is recognised for its growing diversity. In the most recent Census of England and
41 Wales 14% of the population identified as from an ethnic minority background (Figure 1); whilst these
42 figures are lower in Scotland (4%) and Northern Ireland (1.8%) all regions have seen significant growth
43 of their minority communities over the last two decades. Half of the total minority population are of
44 South Asian descent (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, or other Asian origin), around 25% are of Black,
45 African, Caribbean or other Black descent, and there are smaller communities of Arab and other ethnic
46 backgrounds (3). Growth in the diversity of the UK population is relatively recent compared to other
47 regions, beginning mainly in response post-second world war appeals to citizens of Europe and the
48 Commonwealth regions to move to the UK to assist with gaps in its labour market, including its public
49 services such as the newly created National Health Service. This led to a large influx of labour in the
50 1950s from a number of European nations (e.g. Hungary, Italy, Ireland and Poland) as well the
51 Commonwealth nations of India, Pakistan and the Caribbean islands, particularly Jamaica. The
52 symbolic starting point of mass migration from the Caribbean was the journey of almost 500 West
53 Indians on the *SS Empire Windrush* from Kingston, Jamaica in June 1948. From the Indian
54 subcontinent, the majority of immigrants arrived in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s and included
55 Hindus from the Gujarat region of western India, Sikhs from the eastern Punjab region, and Muslims
56 both from the west part of Pakistan and from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Migrants from the
57 African continent form another significant proportion of the UK population; often from Commonwealth
58 countries, such as Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya, the majority of migration from these countries has tended
59 to be more recent, peaking around the 1980s and often in response to economic downturn post-

60 independence. Asylum from civil unrest is another driver of recent migration to the UK from countries
61 such as Somalia. Migrants from African nations currently form the largest growing ethnic minority
62 group in the UK population, whilst growth of other ethnic minority populations is slowing (3).

63 Ethnicity is a complex multidimensional construct that groups people who identify with each other
64 through shared cultural traditions. Membership of an ethnic group tends to be defined by shared cultural
65 heritage, ancestry, language, history, diet, religion or physical appearance (4). Ethnicity, therefore,
66 should be self-defined, allowing the individual to assert their identity, although it is often established
67 or confirmed through information on parental and grandparental origin (5). The term 'ethnic minority
68 group' has traditionally described migrant communities, i.e. people with a different birth country to that
69 in which they reside. However, it is now recognised that classifying ethnicity according to country of
70 birth is inappropriate in many regions of the world where communities of 2nd and 3rd generation migrants
71 live, and as such new terminologies, which capture ancestry rather than place of birth have been
72 introduced e.g. Black-British and Asian-American. It is important to distinguish ethnicity from race or
73 racial background, which is a cruder/simpler construct that uses physical traits, such as skin colour, to
74 group people.

75 ***Diabetes in Ethnic Minority Groups – the scale of the problem***

76 Diabetes is a major UK public health priority. Currently in the UK, 5.6% of the population or 3.7 million
77 individuals have diagnosed diabetes but the true prevalence is thought to be nearer 7.4% when
78 undiagnosed individuals are taken in to account (6). Among ethnic minority groups the prevalence is
79 alarmingly high, about three to five times higher (Figure 2). Modelling of data from the London
80 'SABRE' multi-ethnic cohort estimates that by age 80 years, 40-50% of South Asian and African-
81 Caribbean men and women will have T2DM, at least twice the proportion of their age-matched White-
82 European counterparts (7). Particularly striking is the earlier onset of T2DM; a recent analysis of UK
83 primary care data showed the age of diagnosis to be 10-12 years younger on average in South Asians
84 (46 ± 12 years) and Black African/Caribbeans (48 ± 12 years) compared to White-Europeans (58 ± 12
85 years) (8). Furthermore, a significantly greater proportion of people from ethnic minority backgrounds
86 develop T2DM before the age of 40 years compared to White-Europeans (Figure 3) (8). The significant

87 variability in diabetes prevalence within a given ethnic group between different environments (for
88 example, indigenous *versus* diasporic communities) provides evidence that these disparities are driven
89 by a complex interplay of biological, lifestyle, social, clinical and healthcare system factors.

90 While this review will focus on adult T2DM, it is important to recognise that childhood T2DM is
91 significantly more prevalent among children and adolescents from ethnic minority groups than children
92 of White-European ancestry. The US SEARCH for Diabetes in Youth study, which recently reported a
93 30.5% increase in T2DM amongst 10-19 year olds between 2001 and 2009, shows the disproportionate
94 burden of T2DM among children from ethnic minority groups, with an estimated prevalence of 1.20
95 per 1000 among American-Indian youth and 1.06 per 1000 among Black African-American youth
96 compared to 0.17 per 1000 among White-American youth (9). In the UK it is estimated that South Asian
97 children are 14 times more likely to develop T2DM than White-European children (10), which may be
98 driven by higher body fat and central fat accumulation (11).

99 ***Risk factors and aetiology of diabetes in ethnic minority groups***

100 Recognition of ethnic patterns of disease has led to extensive research investigating the roles of genetic,
101 social and lifestyle factors in these inequalities.

102 The contribution that genetic factors make to ethnic inequalities in T2DM is unclear. The majority of
103 studies, focused on common variants, suggest there is no ethnic variation in the genetic architecture that
104 confers an increased T2DM risk, however, large-scale genetic studies in non-White European
105 populations are lacking (2, 12).

106 Epidemiological evidence and migration studies that recognise different rates of disease within an
107 ethnic group living in different environments or countries demonstrates the influence of non-genetic
108 factors e.g. prevalence of T2DM is around 2% among Asian-Indians living in rural areas of India
109 compared to around 8% among Asian-Indians living in urban India, and Asian-Indians living in the UK
110 or other westernised countries, have about four times higher prevalence (13, 14). The comparison in
111 populations of African ancestry is even more striking as it is estimated that African-Americans have a

112 prevalence of T2DM at least 12 times greater than that observed among indigenous African-Blacks (15-
113 18).

114 Obesity represents one of the strongest contributors to the development of T2DM; around 90% of adults
115 with T2DM are overweight or obese, and T2DM is five times more prevalent amongst adults with an
116 obese body mass index (BMI) compared to those with a healthy weight (19). In the UK around 60% of
117 adults are overweight or obese ($\text{BMI} \geq 25 \text{ kg/m}^2$) and 25% are obese ($\text{BMI} \geq 30 \text{ kg/m}^2$) (20). In some
118 ethnic groups obesity rates are high, for example Black African/Caribbean women, but in others e.g.
119 Black African/Caribbean men, the rates are no different to White-Europeans or the general population
120 (Figure 4) (1). Recently a number of UK-based multi-ethnic cohort studies have identified that ethnic
121 minority groups experience a higher risk of T2DM at lower levels of obesity than White-Europeans (8,
122 21, 22). Modelling of UK Biobank data have demonstrated that T2DM prevalence in South Asian
123 groups with a BMI of 22 kg/m^2 is equivalent to T2DM prevalence in White groups with a BMI of 30
124 kg/m^2 ; while in Black African/Caribbean groups the equivalent BMI is 26 kg/m^2 , and in Chinese women
125 and men it is 24 and 26 kg/m^2 , respectively (21). Data from The Health Improvement Network (THIN),
126 a UK longitudinal general practice dataset, demonstrates that South Asians and Black
127 African/Caribbeans have significantly higher probability of developing T2DM in the normal and
128 overweight BMI categories, compared to White-Europeans and significantly more South Asians (38%)
129 develop T2DM at a BMI below 30 kg/m^2 than White-Europeans (26%) and Black African/Caribbeans
130 (29%) (8). Emerging evidence from the Child Heart and Health Study in England (CHASE), in which
131 ethnic patterns in adiposity have been assessed in UK South Asian, Black African/Caribbean and White-
132 European ethnicity, has shown higher levels of adiposity at any given BMI among South Asian children
133 and lower or similar among Black African/Caribbean children compared to White-Europeans. These
134 data suggest that BMI systematically underestimates adiposity in South Asians (23) and helps to explain
135 why T2DM occurs at lower BMI cut-offs in South Asian communities. Drawn together this evidence
136 suggests that conventional clinical definitions for obesity, that are derived from populations of White
137 European descent ($\text{BMI} \geq 30 \text{ kg/m}^2$; waist circumference $\geq 88 \text{ cm}$ in women and $\geq 102 \text{ cm}$ in men), may
138 not be appropriate for screening diabetes risk in non-white groups. In response the World Health

139 Organisation (WHO) and International Diabetes Federation (IDF) have proposed Asian specific
140 thresholds in which overweight is defined as a BMI >23 kg/m² and obesity >27.5 kg/m², with waist
141 circumference cut-offs of 80 cm for Asian women and 90 cm for Asian men (24, 25), although there is
142 concern that these may be too conservative and lower cut-offs should be introduced (26). Currently
143 there is insufficient data to derive specific cut-offs for Black African/Caribbean men and women,
144 therefore European thresholds remain in use with these communities.

145 *Ethnic differences in the pathophysiology of diabetes*

146 The main pathophysiological processes underlying T2DM development are well documented and focus
147 on the role of obesity, visceral and ectopic fat accumulation, insulin resistance and insulin secretory
148 failure (27). Originally insulin resistance was proposed as the principal abnormality, attributed to
149 visceral fat accumulation and the resultant flow of free fatty acids into the portal vein and deposition of
150 hepatic fat. Insulin resistance would subsequently lead to compensatory insulin hypersecretion to
151 maintain normoglycaemia. At the point of 'beta-cell exhaustion' or 'burn-out', where the beta-cells are
152 unable to secrete sufficient insulin, the state of frank hyperglycaemia develops. It is now understood
153 that there is a heterogeneity in the relationship between insulin sensitivity and insulin secretion, in that
154 glucose tolerance can be maintained even in the presence of severe insulin resistance if the beta-cell
155 secretory capacity is able to balance the degree of insulin resistance. Conversely, an individual may
156 become hyperglycaemic with a relatively low level of insulin resistance if they have a low beta-cell
157 secretory capacity.

158 There is a wealth of research investigating ethnic differences in the pathophysiology of T2DM. There
159 is much debate as to whether the predominant mechanism in the development of T2DM differs
160 according to ethnicity; much of the uncertainty comes from the contrast between methods used to
161 measure these processes in large scale cohort/epidemiological studies compared to those used in
162 detailed mechanistic investigations. In the UK SABRE cohort beta-cell function was lowest among
163 Black African/Caribbean participants while South Asians showed more adverse measures of insulin
164 resistance and higher calculated beta-cell function (7). While there is extensive evidence coming both
165 from large-scale epidemiological studies and smaller detailed mechanistic investigations demonstrating

166 greater insulin resistance among South Asian populations compared to White-Europeans (28-35), there
167 is also evidence that suggests South Asian populations are not characterised by more severe insulin
168 resistance (36) and that progression of T2DM is more strongly linked to susceptibility of the beta-cells
169 than insulin resistance (37-39). Detailed physiological studies in Black populations have also focused
170 on the role of inadequate beta-cell function in the development of T2DM. An exaggerated insulin
171 response to glucose stimulation in Blacks compared to other ethnic groups has been consistently
172 reported, which is recognised to be driven by a combination of higher insulin secretion and lower
173 hepatic insulin clearance (40, 41). Recent evidence has shown that by the point of frank T2DM there
174 are greater failures in beta-cell insulin secretory capacity in Blacks but that these are still compensated
175 for by reduced hepatic insulin clearance (42). It is important to note that there is a lack of longitudinal
176 data in this field, therefore, it is still not possible to draw clear conclusions.

177 Insulin resistance is closely associated with occurrence of the Metabolic Syndrome, defined as a
178 clustering of metabolic derangements including abdominal obesity, dyslipidaemia (raised triglyceride
179 and low high-density lipoprotein (HDL) concentrations), hypertension and dysglycaemia (25), which is
180 known to increase the risk of T2DM and cardiovascular disease (43, 44). South Asian populations are
181 recognised to exhibit many features of Metabolic Syndrome in the prediabetic and diabetic state,
182 particularly central obesity and dyslipidaemia (45), however Black African/Caribbean populations have
183 a distinct phenotype in which there is marked hypertension (46) but in the absence of dyslipidaemia or
184 central obesity (47-49). These ethnic patterns in cardiometabolic risk are evident in early life, for
185 example dyslipidaemia was found to be most prevalent among South Asian, and least prevalent among
186 Black African/Caribbean children in the CHASE study (50).

187 Increasing body fat content is linearly related to insulin resistance (51-54), however, it is now accepted
188 that fat distribution, particularly abdominal/visceral fat, is a more sensitive predictor of insulin
189 sensitivity than body mass index (BMI). Consistently in the literature South Asians are reported to have
190 higher amounts of body fat for a given BMI and a higher risk of developing central obesity compared
191 to White-Europeans despite similar or smaller body mass index values (55, 56). Evidence suggests that
192 South Asians may be more prone to visceral fat deposition than White-Europeans or African-ancestry

193 groups, who develop less visceral obesity for a similar BMI (57), although the evidence for this is not
194 always consistent (58) with the suggestion that visceral accumulation is more evident in men (59). There
195 is a lot of interest in visceral fat in Black populations, who despite exhibiting markedly greater insulin
196 resistance than White-Europeans have significantly less visceral fat (60). These differences are apparent
197 as early as childhood/adolescence, indicating that these differences manifest early in life (61). While
198 increased adiposity, particularly visceral adiposity, is a strong determinant of insulin resistance, this
199 may not be as important in the development of T2DM in Black populations as it is in other ethnic groups
200 (62).

201 Ectopic fat, defined as the deposition of triglycerides within cells of non-adipose tissue, is believed to
202 be integral to the development of T2DM by causing metabolic disturbances in the organ/tissue it resides
203 in (63). Visceral, liver and pancreatic fat are important ectopic depots. Ethnic specific patterns of ectopic
204 fat have not been well investigated. In European populations liver fat has been shown to consistently
205 correlate with measures of insulin resistance. South Asian populations have consistently been shown to
206 exhibit elevated liver fat (59, 64) but there is a paucity of data regarding pancreatic lipid. In Black
207 populations the majority of studies have been conducted in adolescent cohorts, with a focus on obese
208 populations without diabetes (65, 66). Visceral fat, liver and pancreatic fat have been reported to be
209 lower in Black populations compared to their White counterparts (65, 67). In a review of ethnic
210 differences in the prevalence of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), Pan *et al.* found several
211 studies consistently reporting a significantly lower prevalence of NAFLD in Black compared to White
212 populations (68). However, there is evidence that Black populations may be more sensitive to the
213 negative effects of liver fat accumulation (65). In adults contradictory findings have been reported; liver
214 fat has been found to be inversely associated with hepatic insulin sensitivity in Black but not White
215 women (69), however, the opposite was found in Black *versus* White men where liver fat was inversely
216 associated with hepatic insulin sensitivity in White but not Black men (70). This suggests that not only
217 are there ethnic disparities but there are gender differences in the role of ectopic fat in the
218 pathophysiology of T2DM within the Black ethnic groups where further research is required. Overall,
219 studies of ectopic fat accumulation show that these features identify a subset of individuals at increased

220 risk of T2DM and CVD, although these relationships are affected by ethnicity. Data across different
221 ethnicities highlight differences in the pathogenesis of insulin resistance.

222 *Glycaemic control, diabetes complications and mortality*

223 Hyperglycaemia is an important risk factor for the development of diabetic microvascular complications
224 (71); HbA1c has been established as a sensitive marker of glycaemic control and microvascular risk.
225 However there is concern over the use of HbA1c both for monitoring glycaemic control and in the
226 diagnosis of diabetes in some ethnic groups because higher HbA1c values, in the region of 0.4%, have
227 been consistently reported, particularly among Black African/Caribbeans, at all levels of glycaemia (72,
228 73). In the recent South London Diabetes Study, HbA1c was significantly higher in Black
229 African/Caribbean people with newly diagnosed T2DM compared to White-Europeans (74). Paul *et al.*
230 (2017) also recognised significantly higher HbA1c, and a greater proportion of people with HbA1c \geq
231 58 mmol/mol, among Black African-Caribbean participants compared to South Asians or White-
232 Europeans (8). In a longitudinal analysis of 24,111 adults from inner London, ethnicity was
233 independently associated with HbA1c, and both South Asian and Black African/Caribbean adults
234 demonstrated worse glycaemic control despite more intensive management (75). Ethnic differences in
235 HbA1c are proposed to be, at least in part, due to non-glycaemic factors such as variation in glycation
236 rates and erythrocyte membrane permeability to glucose (76). However, glycated albumin and
237 fructosamine, which are less affected by non-glycaemic factors, have been shown to also be higher in
238 non-White European groups (72), suggesting real differences in glycaemic control and an important
239 contributor to the development of complications and poor outcomes for these ethnic groups. Currently
240 ethnic-specific HbA1c criteria are not in use, however, a growing body of evidence suggests that
241 diagnostic and monitoring cut-points should be used with caution in non-White European groups, as
242 misdiagnosis is significantly more common than in White populations (76).

243 Whether ethnic differences in mortality and rates of microvascular and macrovascular complications
244 exist in diabetes has been addressed in a number of large cohorts, for example the UKPDS (77, 78) and
245 the Southall Diabetes Study (79, 80). In their systematic review of 51 studies Lanting *et al.* (81)
246 described distinct differences in the conclusions drawn from US and UK based studies. In the US rates

247 of mortality and risk of lower limb amputation, retinopathy, nephropathy and end stage renal disease
248 are consistently higher amongst non-White European ethnic groups. However, in the UK this is not the
249 case, compared to White-Europeans, Black African/Caribbean and South Asians have been found to
250 have lower risks of lower limb amputation (82, 83), equal rates of retinopathy in Black
251 African/Caribbean (79) and lower rates in South Asians (84), lower rates of cardiovascular
252 complications in Black African/Caribbean and lower or equal rates in South Asians (79, 84). It is only
253 nephropathy and end stage renal disease for which the rates are worse in South Asians (84, 85) but equal
254 in Black African/Caribbeans (79). Although there are cultural differences between ethnic groups living
255 in the US and the UK, these differences in mortality and morbidity cannot be attributed to genetic
256 differences, and much more likely point towards differences in healthcare systems, access and quality
257 of care (81). More recently ethnic differences in diabetes complications have been investigated using
258 data from the UK THIN database (86). At diagnosis the rates of comorbidities were 30% in White-
259 Europeans compared with 11% of African-Caribbeans and South Asians (86). Clear distinctions in the
260 incidence of chronic kidney disease (CKD) have been found, which is higher in White-Europeans than
261 both Black African-Caribbeans and South Asians (86). Ethnic differences in the incidence of major
262 cardiovascular diseases are also apparent; coronary heart disease (CHD) is highest among South Asians,
263 while Black African-Caribbeans experience significantly lower rates of CHD compared to White-
264 Europeans and South Asians, but rates of stroke do not differ by ethnicity (86, 87). Detailed
265 investigations in the SABRE cohort are providing evidence for the mechanisms which may underlie
266 these ethnic patterns in cardiovascular diseases. For example, arterial stiffness has recently been
267 reported to be more favourable among Black compared to South Asians, which may explain some of
268 the relative protection from coronary heart disease experienced by UK Black African/Caribbean groups
269 (88). In a focus on CHD among South Asians Park *et al.* recently reported the detrimental impact of
270 hyperglycaemia on left ventricular failure in South Asians that is not seen in White-Europeans (89).

271 ***Healthcare access and engagement***

272 Cultural barriers to accessing healthcare make an important contribution to ethnic inequalities in
273 diabetes. Linguistic and cultural differences, poor health literacy, low socioeconomic position and their

274 migrant status (90) often result in people from non-White European ethnic backgrounds having poorer
275 diabetes knowledge and worse diabetes control (81). The UK National Service Framework for Diabetes
276 recognises that diabetes services must be equitable to meet the needs of the population and to narrow
277 the inequalities gap for groups with the poorest outcomes (91). The recent Department of Health (DH)
278 strategy for the management of long-term conditions highlights the need to promote patient involvement
279 and self-management (92) and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)
280 recommends self-management education is accessible for all people with diabetes, taking into account
281 culture and ethnicity (93). In pursuit of this diabetes services principally aim to deliver patient-centred
282 care that is responsive to individual culture, lifestyle and religion, which will empower and enable
283 people to self-manage their diabetes through support and education (91). However, evidence from the
284 Healthcare Commission suggests that people from non-White European ethnic backgrounds are more
285 likely to report not having the opportunity to attend an education course, suggesting that access issues
286 are impacting on these groups disproportionately (94). Poor access to healthcare is a significant issue
287 for non-White European ethnic groups (90); the DH report *'No patient left behind'* was commissioned
288 in response to findings that people from non-White European ethnic backgrounds find it more difficult
289 to access primary care services than White populations and their healthcare needs are not met by current
290 services (95).

291 Self-management programmes and diet/lifestyle advice, which form the cornerstone of diabetes care,
292 are less effective in people from non-White European ethnic backgrounds (96). This is often attributed
293 to a lack of cultural competency amongst healthcare practitioners, and a failure to account for cultural
294 beliefs and practices in generic education programmes (97). Culturally tailored advice and education
295 programmes that are respectful of, and responsive to, the health beliefs, practices, cultural and linguistic
296 needs of diverse people have been developed to overcome issues relating to healthcare access in people
297 from non-White European ethnic backgrounds, and have been shown to bring about positive health
298 outcomes (97). Furthermore ensuring cultural competency of healthcare professionals, such that they
299 understand and can address the customs, beliefs and values of people from different cultural

300 backgrounds is proposed as a principal way to address ethnic inequalities in diabetes and its
301 management (98).

302 *Health behaviour contributors to ethnic disparities in diabetes*

303 It is recognised that among any ethnic group there is huge diversity in terms of health beliefs and
304 behaviours and ‘culture’ is an ever-changing concept; this is particularly true among different
305 generations of migrant groups, who may undergo significant acculturation. However, a wealth of
306 evidence exists which describes distinct cultural beliefs and behaviours that exist amongst non-White
307 European ethnic groups and can act as barriers to healthful self-management practices. Consideration
308 of these is important when delivering education programmes and promoting self-management practices
309 amongst these patient groups. In South Asian communities language and communication discordance
310 is often focused on as a significant barrier to receiving and understanding diabetes education. However,
311 there are a number of deeper cultural structures, which may act as stronger barriers, and may not receive
312 enough focus. Themes reported in the literature include, for example, a strong preference for traditional
313 remedies and folk medicine, and a concern over the long-term safety of conventional medicines; beliefs
314 that management should be left to qualified health professionals, a reliance on physician-led advice and
315 a reluctance to partake in self-management; fatalist beliefs and the view that diabetes is not something
316 to be concerned about, or it is inevitable, due to its widespread nature; risk being attributed to external
317 influences e.g. stress, heredity, ‘the will of God/Allah’ for which the person with diabetes has a lack of
318 control; beliefs that excess weight indicates good health; social responsibilities to maintain a traditional
319 diet and misconceptions about the principles of the ‘diabetic diet’; a lack of gender specific exercise
320 facilities, a fear of injury or worsening health with exercise, and exercising being seen as a selfish
321 activity that detracts from family commitments (99-102). These beliefs may be more relevant among
322 older generations, those who are less acculturated, or those who associate more closely to traditional
323 cultural practices.

324 In African-Caribbean communities, where language discordance may not be a prominent barrier to
325 receiving health education, important cultural beliefs and behaviours are still recognised that should be
326 considered. Themes reported in the literature include, for example, a strong distrust of medical advice

327 and a desire for natural, non-pharmacological therapies (103). Healthcare professionals are perceived
328 commonly as lacking cultural understanding (104) and their advice lacking cultural relevance (105) or
329 being poorly adapted to cultural needs (103). In addition, specific barriers associated with applying
330 dietary advice to cultural foods consumed at home, an acceptance of larger body sizes and a lack of
331 cultural salience of engagement in moderate or vigorous physical activity can limit positive health
332 behaviours (106). Again, there may be generational differences in these beliefs and practices that have
333 yet to be recognised in the literature.

334 Diabetes health education that has been culturally-tailored or is culturally appropriate brings about
335 significantly greater improvements in glycaemic control, diabetes knowledge and self-efficacy than
336 conventional education (107). However, it is noteworthy that very few culturally-tailored programmes
337 have been evaluated in the UK. Only four out of the 33 trials included in the recent Cochrane review
338 were UK-based, and they all focused on South Asian communities using linguistic adaptations (108-
339 111). Effective methods of culturally tailoring have been identified in a recent systematic review (112)
340 and include:

- 341 • Bilingual/bicultural professional educators or lay educators providing the education
- 342 • Teaching/counselling about dietary change by modifying ethnic foods and recipes
- 343 • Teaching/counselling of activity change using culturally appropriate activities e.g. dancing
344 and walking
- 345 • Delivery of intervention in preferred language, including all materials
- 346 • Attendance by family members to elicit home-based support
- 347 • Use of visual aids to tailor to low-literacy needs

348 ***Diabetes Prevention***

349 Diabetes prevention, targeting specific ethnic groups, has been evaluated in large scale trials and shown
350 to be effective in indigenous communities in India (113, 114) and China (115). Definitive trials of
351 T2DM prevention focusing on high-risk *migrant* populations have yet to be conducted; instead smaller
352 scale studies have focused on prevention indirectly through weight loss rather than incident diabetes.

353 Achievement of weight loss amongst non-White European ethnic groups is noted as particularly
354 challenging; a range of cultural beliefs and practices relating to body size and weight often act as barriers
355 to behaviour change (116). For example, African-Americans participating in the Diabetes Prevention
356 Programme and other weight loss trials achieve approximately half the magnitude of weight loss than
357 that achieved by White-Americans (116, 117). While in a large scale trial of UK South Asians the
358 authors noted that weight loss, although significant, was relatively modest (118), and another trial failed
359 to achieve significant results (119). Understanding how to effectively engage high risk groups, such as
360 ethnic minority communities, in health promotion interventions has been receiving increasing attention
361 in recent years as tackling health inequalities has become a public health priority. Community
362 engagement approaches have advanced as a promising strategy, the evidence for which has been
363 comprehensively reviewed by O'Mara-Eves *et al.* (120). Community engagement methods are defined
364 as 'involving communities in decision-making and in the planning, design, governance and delivery of
365 services' (120). Community engagement approaches can take many forms including service user
366 networks, volunteering or interventions delivered by trained peers. In their review O'Mara-Eves *et al.*
367 concluded that there is strong evidence that community engagement interventions have a positive
368 impact on health behaviours, health consequences, self-efficacy and perceived social support outcomes
369 across a range of conditions and should therefore be incorporated into public health intervention design
370 (120). It is acknowledged, however, that there is little data on the cost effectiveness of such strategies
371 as they have rarely been evaluated against standard models of care. One example of this approach that
372 has been evaluated in diabetes prevention is working in partnership with community organisations such
373 as churches and faith-based institutions, which can overcome issues of distrust associated with
374 healthcare settings. Faith-based diabetes prevention programmes have been evaluated in the USA and
375 demonstrated significant improvements in weight, BMI, fasting glucose and healthy nutrition and
376 activity behaviours (121, 122) but these approaches have yet to be trialled in the UK in which the role
377 churches and faith institutions play in society is different to the US.

378 **Conclusion**

379 T2DM is a major public health priority, currently affecting over 3 million individuals in the UK. Non-
380 White European ethnic groups are disproportionately burdened by T2DM; prevalence is alarmingly
381 high, and it is diagnosed some 10-12 years earlier than in White-Europeans. These disparities are driven
382 by a complex interplay of biological, lifestyle, social, clinical and health system factors. Tackling ethnic
383 inequalities in diabetes requires cultural competency among healthcare professionals and culturally-
384 sensitive interventions that are tailored to the health beliefs and practices of these cultural groups.

385 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

386 **Figure 1. Ethnic groups, England and Wales Census 2011. Reproduced from Office for National**
387 **Statistics.**

388 **Figure 2. Doctor-diagnosed type 2 diabetes among ethnic minority groups in England & Wales.**
389 **Reproduced from Health Survey for England focus on ethnic minority health, 2004.**

390 **Figure 3. Age distribution of people with type 2 diabetes in White-European, African-Caribbean**
391 **and South Asian ethnic groups in the UK. Reproduced from Paul SK et al. Diabetes, Obesity &**
392 **Metabolism. 2017;19(7):1014-23.**

393 **Figure 4. Prevalence of obesity amongst ethnic groups in England and Wales. Reproduced from**
394 **Health Survey for England focus on ethnic minority health, 2004.**

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