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ONE SIZE FITS ALL?

An outpatient pain management programme for patients with English as a second language

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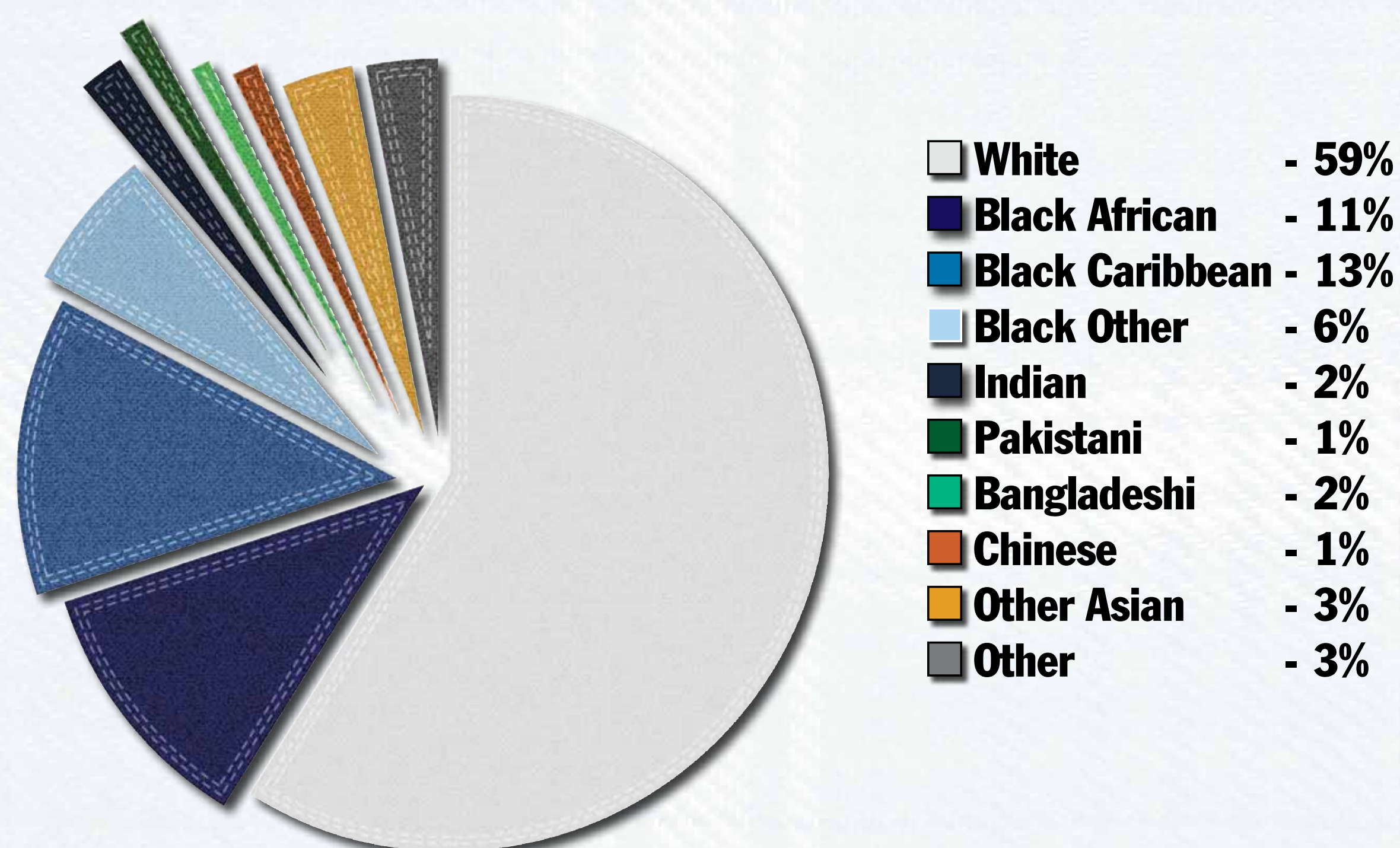
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Introduction:

The UK has an ethnically diverse population, and it is estimated that nearly 1 million students speak English as a second language (ESL)¹. Similarly, a significant proportion of the adult population in the UK have English as their second language, although the actual figure is unknown. Consequently, many NHS services make use of translators and bilingual clinicians to cater for ESL patients, as excluding this group would be discriminatory. However, very few Pain Management Programmes (PMPs) have specific services for ESL patients and some require adequate literacy skills in their eligibility criteria for being accepted on a PMP, suggesting that one size doesn't fit all. Those services that do offer an ESL PMP, often run a programme entirely in the language of the dominant local ethnic group. The London Borough of Lewisham has a mixed ethnic population, with no one dominant language.

Projected Ethnicity of the Lewisham Population



To tackle the problem of having a group of patients from varied backgrounds with limited literacy skills, a new ESL PMP was piloted. To date, the pilot programme has only been run with four participants and therefore it is not possible to do a quantitative analysis of its effects. Instead, this poster describes the experience of one of the participants (Ali) to illustrate what the programme can achieve.

Method:

ESL PMP Information: The ESL PMP pilot consisted of four patients, each of whom had difficulties with speaking, reading and/or writing English. The programme ran once a week, for 3 consecutive weeks; each session was 3 hours long. Two follow-up sessions were also offered at 6 weeks and 12 weeks. Topics in the ESL PMP covered 'What is Pain', 'Pacing' and 'Problem Solving'. As interpreters were involved, information had to be delivered in a clear and concise way, with time allowed for translations to take place. Participants were also given handouts that were written specifically for the ESL group.

Background Patient Information: Information regarding Ali, the focus of the case-study is presented in Table 1.

Demographics

Age	37 years	Gender	Male
Ethnicity	Algerian	Duration of Pain	9 years

Ali presented with post-surgical chronic low back and leg pain together with bilateral shoulder pain. Additionally, he suffered with Crohn's disease and diabetes. Ali was originally considered for an intensive inpatient PMP at a different service. However, he was not offered a place as he was not able to self-care (i.e. wash and dress). He was assessed for the standard ten week outpatient CALM PMP, but it was decided that it was not suitable for Ali due to the amount of reading and writing that was involved in the programme. Whilst Ali could communicate verbally in English, he had significant difficulties with reading and writing.

Prior to the ESL PMP Ali was physically very limited. He was not working, relied on his partner for help with most of his activities of daily living, and spent much of the day lying down. He believed he couldn't move as it would harm him. Ali described feeling angry and upset as there was no 'solution' for his pain.

Results:

Following the programme Ali showed a greater understanding of his pain condition, and was able to explain to others that his pain was due to changes in sensitivity of his nerves. He accepted that there was no cure for his pain, and was also able to understand the concept of pacing. Ali applied pacing to his daily life and was able to do more physical activities. He achieved his goal of leaving the house more often and socialising with friends/family. Ali decided to enrol on an education course to improve his employment prospects, and also said he was no longer upset or angry because of his pain.

Conclusion:

There is strong evidence that PMPs are effective^{2, 3} but they may not always meet the needs of patients for whom English is a second language. Ali's limitations in self-care as well as limited capacity for reading and writing English meant that he did not fulfil the criteria to attend either a standard inpatient or outpatient PMP. An alternative might have been to offer individual sessions but that would mean that Ali would not have had the benefit of the support from other patients with chronic pain, which is one of the strengths of a group PMP approach. However, offering him an adapted group programme enabled him to make significant changes. Running a pilot group, specially adapted for ESL patients allowed patients with difficulties speaking, reading or writing English to access a group PMP approach relevant to their individual needs. The present case study suggests an area for future research in the form of a quantitative study examining outcome data for a larger sample of patients completing an ESL PMP. Clinically, such an approach provides a flexible service to meet the needs of patients who would not otherwise be able to access a group PMP. One size may not fit all, but that does not mean ESL patients cannot benefit from an adapted PMP.

The pilot ESL PMP presented in this poster will continue to be developed in the future. Contact has already been made with ESL specialists, and advice will be sought on how to best tailor handouts and information for patients.

References:

- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/7719738/Almost-1m-pupils-speak-English-as-second-language.html>
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