

Notes from Mosaic Community Trust – Blood Pressure Session – 30th November 2022

On the 30th November 2022, we were invited to attend the Mosaic Community Trust to undertake an information session on blood pressure. The meeting was held at the Portman Early Childhood Centre near Church Street, Westminster.

Background

The [Mosaic Community Trust](#) (a registered charity; from here on in referred to as Mosaic) supports the local community in and around Church Street, one of the most deprived areas of Westminster in London. Their mission is to empower diverse, socially, and economically marginalised and disadvantaged black and minority ethnic communities and promote community cohesion and integration.

This session came about from project being undertaken by Imperial College Health Partners (ICHP) and North West London Integrated Board (NWL ICB) exploring the management of blood pressure for people who live or receive care in North West London. To capture views related to this topic a survey was circulated across communities, including the Mosaic Community Trust. On receipt of this opportunity, it was raised by Lena (CEO of the Mosaic Community Trust) that this survey and approach would not be appropriate for capturing the views of their community.

From this we developed a 2-hour face-to-face session with their community advocates and others from the community interested in joining to provide further information about the topic and to answer any questions they had which could then be shared amongst the wider community.

The session was developed and hosted in collaboration with a local GP (Dr Katrina Humphreys, Lisson Grove Health Centre) with support from Halle Johnson and Maria Piggin (Patient Experience Research Centre), Judy Slape and Shanta Raj (Imperial College Health Partners) and key leads across Mosaic including the Head of Community Programmes (Habiba) and Mosaic's CEO (Lena).

The session was attended by 28 women aged 29 – 82 years old from diverse backgrounds (including Eritrean, Filipino, Moroccan, Iraqi, Bengali Pakistani, Bangladeshi and English). Attendees also included several of Mosaic's health and wellbeing advocates including Alima, Fahmida, Louise and Asmahan.

Aims and format of the session:

The aim of the session was to increase awareness of:

- heart health (what we mean by heart health, what it includes, why it's important)
- blood pressure (what it is, how it's measured, what readings mean)

The Mosaic Community Trust

Community-led Workshop on Blood Pressure with
Dr Katrina Humphreys (GP; Lisson Grove Health Centre)
and
Lena Choudary-Salter (CEO; Mosaic Community Trust) speaking on the importance of health literacy to improve healthcare amongst BAME patients

JOIN US ON
Wednesday
30th of November
@ 11:30am

Venue: Portman Family Centre;
12-18 Salisbury Street London
NW8 8DE

Contact for more info: **07422 384 264**

In collaboration with:
NIHR Imperial Biomedical Research Centre
IMPERIAL COLLEGE HEALTH PARTNERS

Learn about blood pressure and heart health

Understand the risk factors and signs & symptoms of high blood pressure

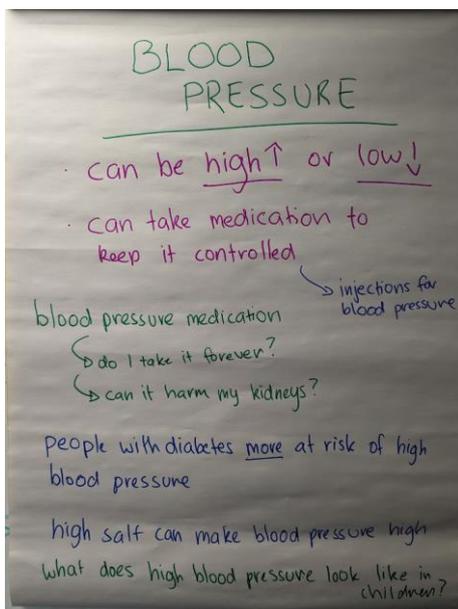
Learn how you can better manage your blood pressure

Share your experiences and ask any questions you have about blood pressure testing and treatment

- Risk factors and outcomes of high blood pressure (why some people have higher/lower BP and what the risk factors are for high BP, what high BP can lead to)
- Signs and symptoms of high blood pressure
- How to get help for concerns about blood pressure
- treatments for high blood pressure

Throughout the session we sat around in a circle with members of the community and Mosaic's community advocates. Using a flip chart, we wrote down key comments from the group as a means of taking notes without being too intrusive.

Understanding of blood pressure



At the start of the session attendees were asked what they currently knew about blood pressure and what their understanding of it was.

Overall, there was quite a good basic understanding of blood pressure, with recognition that it can be high or low and can be controlled by medication.

It was also raised that people with diabetes are more at risk of having high blood pressure, with one community member adding that her daughter has type 1 diabetes and must take injections for blood pressure.

It was also noted that certain foods can make blood pressure high, and this was discussed again later in the session.

There was, however, some misunderstanding of blood pressure as well, with some not knowing that it was having

high blood pressure across months or years that causes the more serious problems, rather than on just one occasion.

What does it mean to have high blood pressure?

Following the initial responses from the group about their own understanding of blood pressure, Dr Humphreys explained that blood pressure shows how healthy your heart and blood vessels are when your heart and blood vessels aren't healthy the vessels narrow and get filled with fatty plaque causing less space for the blood to pump through the vessels.

When the vessels close completely this causes a heart attack and if the blood vessel is in the brain this causes a stroke.

It is dangerous if blood pressure is high over several months or years as this can cause a heart attack or a stroke or damage the kidneys.

Therefore, it's important to get it measured regularly to find out whether your blood pressure is high or low.

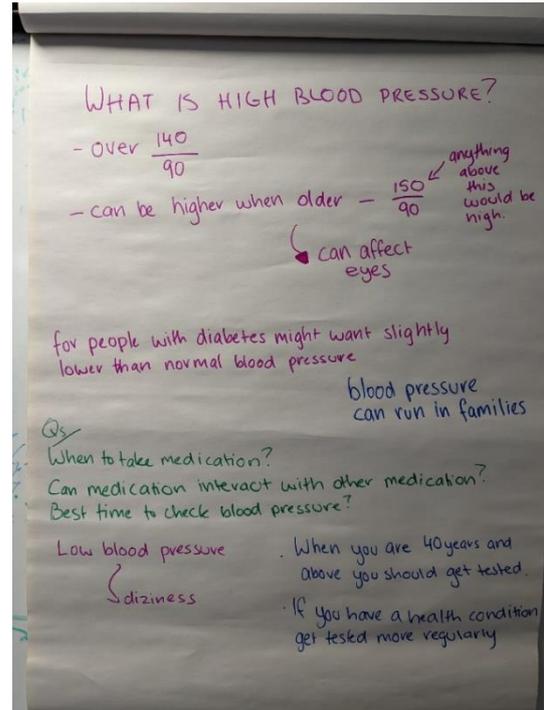
How to tell if you have high blood pressure?

In response to a community members question of 'How do you know if you have high blood pressure?'

Dr Humphreys highlighted that there are usually no symptoms of high blood pressure (unless it is extremely high when you might start to feel dizzy). Low blood pressure can cause dizziness when someone stands up quickly and they could also potentially fall over and have nausea and vomiting. If someone is dehydrated (not enough fluid) their blood pressure can be low but if they sit down, it can come up.

This was important to highlight as many of the community thought that certain symptoms were connected to high blood pressure such as sweating, glaucoma, and hyperactivity.

Therefore, the best way to tell if your blood pressure is high is through getting your blood pressure measured.



How is blood pressure measured?

She talked through the process of measurement; she highlighted that before a reading you might be asked to drink water or sit to let your heart rate come down. Often the first reading might be high due to the anxiety/stress of attending an appointment or from walking to get to the appointment – that is why most doctors will take the measurement 3 times and take the lowest number of all three.

It was explained that during blood pressure measurement doctors are looking at two numbers. A high blood pressure reading is anything over 140/90. As we get older our blood pressure gets higher so for older people high blood pressure is considered as anything over 150/90.

Dr Humphreys explained that as people with diabetes are at higher risk of high blood pressure, it is good to try and maintain their blood pressure slightly below normal.

During the section of the workshop, one community member highlighted their frustration at blood pressure being taken at the start of hospital appointments. While usually her blood pressure was in the normal range, as she had often walked to appointments and not given the chance for her heart rate to recover, it always measured high in these situations, which causes further anxiety and stress.

It was highlighted during this part of the session that residents can attend their local pharmacy for free blood pressure checks. In Church Street, both the Market Pharmacy and Woods Pharmacy offer free blood pressure checks.

The use of home blood pressure monitors was also discussed, with approximately a quarter of those attending the session saying that they have a way to monitor their blood pressure at home.

However, the community wanted more information on when blood pressure should be taken, whether food affects the reading, whether they should be sitting or lying down.

There were also some difficulties in their use, with one member of the community raising that they have a wrist monitor but felt that it was often inaccurate and difficult to wear at night and another community member said wearing such a machine at home had given her bruises. Some community members queried about the use of finger blood pressure monitors and apps which are meant to measure your blood pressure, both of which Dr Humphreys confirmed would not be accurate.

What can make your blood pressure high?

As part of this section of the information session attendees were asked what they thought might cause high blood pressure and the following areas were discussed.

- Fatty meats
- Certain oils
- Salt
- Sugar
- Lack of exercise
- Stress
- Genetics – high blood pressure runs in families so it's recommended that blood pressure should be checked if other people in your family have it
- Diabetes
- Getting older

From this list, healthy diet and exercise were raised as a particular area which the community had little understanding of, largely due to an inability to access culturally relevant advice and programmes.

Lena stated that it is vital that their community understood why diet and exercise were important and how this can impact blood pressure and health more widely. She gave an example from the community, that as meat is cheaper than vegetables, most eat meat which has extra fat on it as this doesn't usually cost more as it would in their own countries. From her own recent experience, she also shared how she had recently got a takeaway from a local Iraqi restaurant which had been recommended to her, however the bags that it came in were filled with oil.

The different types of oils were discussed, and the community raised how they get lots of different advice on which oils and fats to use from different sources and felt there needed to be more consistent information.

It was also raised that GPs aren't trained enough about diet and healthy eating to give patients advice and they should have more insight into what a healthy diet entails for different cultures.

One community member raised that she had been referred to One You Westminster which is a local service for lifestyle advice and exercise programmes. However, this was not accessible for all community members, for instance you require transport to go to the services. They also need to be culturally appropriate, for example a booklet her mother-in-law was given on diabetes didn't reflect her own diet so wasn't useful.

Another community member stated when talking about all the different exercise and diet advice that is given “everybody [in the community] is a doctor” - everybody thinks they know everything, but they don't know anything!

Blood pressure medication and treatment

Attendees also raised several questions about **blood pressure medication**, with many already taking medications to manage their blood pressure. In response to these questions Dr Humphreys confirmed that if they went off their blood pressure medication their blood pressure would go up again, so blood pressure medication is something that needs to be taken forever. A concern was also raised from one community member who takes their blood pressure medication in the morning, however, feels as if they start to feel their blood pressure getting high by the end of the day. In response, Dr Humphreys noted that they should only need one pill a day so should be talking to their GP about a higher dose or a different type of medication if they felt this way.

Further, it was highlighted that it doesn't really matter what time of day you take blood pressure medication as long as you take it. Some studies have shown it's better to take it at night.

The chemist should be able to check whether there are any interactions between blood pressure medication and other medications. Some blood pressure medications are also used for other things so it's important to understand from your GP why you are being asked to take each medication.

How can you manage or prevent getting high blood pressure?

In addition to medication, strategies for lowering blood pressure were discussed this included:

- Getting a good sleep
- Regular exercise
- Not having too much coffee/black tea (caffeine)
- Eating well

One community member asked about the use of homeopathic medications in which Dr Humphreys responded that people could try these with their blood pressure medications but looking at diet and exercise is also important.

Questions asked by the community during the session:

- What does high blood pressure look like in children?
- Can taking blood pressure medication harm my kidneys?
- Do you need to take blood pressure medication forever?
- When should you take blood pressure medication?
- When is the best time to take your blood pressure?
- Can blood pressure medicine interact with other medication?

Recommendations for clinical care raised during the session:

Throughout the session several recommendations were made in terms of improving clinical care, local services, and research. These are outlined below:

- Blood pressure for hospital appointments should not be taken at the start of the appointment, or appropriate time should be given to recover so blood pressure is measured more accurately.
- More availability of larger blood pressure cuffs in GP surgeries/pharmacies to minimise wait time for blood pressure measurement.
- More information on best home blood pressure monitors to buy and practicalities of how/when to use them.
- As GPs are seen as the experts for many in the community, and is who they will listen to most, they need to be given more training on diet so they can provide more detailed advice about diet and what constitute healthy and unhealthy food, this information also needs to be tailored on an individual basis to take into consideration cultural factors. As part of this GPs should also give graphic and verbal explanations of the impact of eating high fat diets instead of just saying to eat “a healthy diet” – leaflets and referrals to generic programmes are not enough.
- Overall, there is a need for more consistent and accessible information about ‘healthy diet’ and recommended exercise which is appropriate across cultures.

Recommendations for further collaboration:

- During the session it was highlighted that Mosaic would like to run a project with local restaurants to assess how healthy their menus were and provide advice on what changes they could make to make their food healthier. It was suggested that this could be a possible collaboration with Imperial.
- Although many in attendance were aware of the risks associated with high blood pressure (see feedback on pg 7), further information needs to be given on how to manage these risks including lifestyle changes (diet and exercise) that are culturally relevant and appropriate for the community.

Impacts from the session

- Increased awareness and knowledge of blood pressure. This was particularly important as many of the community thought that symptoms such as sweating, dizziness and eye problems were signs of high blood pressure. However, it was made clear during the session that getting their blood pressure measured at the GP surgery, local pharmacy or at home was the best way of identifying high blood pressure. Therefore, it needs to be measured regularly.
- The Mosaic Community Health and Wellbeing advocates took the initiative to do a carry-on session at our Monday drop-in session, following the session for those who were absent. We did a breakdown of some of the points mentioned during the workshop and shared practical tips on overall health and wellbeing contributing to blood pressure furthering the reach of the information shared at this session.
- The discussion identified key concerns and issues related to blood pressure management and measurement, which can directly be taken back to and fed into local GP services through Dr Katrina Humphreys (the facilitator for the session) and into local Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust services (through members of Imperial College Health Partners and Imperial Patient Experience Research Centre who were present at the session). This included consideration of timing for blood pressure measurements at hospital

appointments, more availability for larger blood pressure cuffs, more training for GPs on diet and more culturally relevant and accessible information on healthy eating.

- The insights from this session have been fed back to the North West London Integrated Care Board Cardiovascular Disease Steering Group and the Hypertension Working Group. This has provided valuable insights into understanding our communities and there is an ambition to build on this session by engaging with other community and patient groups to build a wider picture of hypertension and cardiovascular disease within the community. The group is also planning to share the results of the survey and workshop in a future webinars series with clinicians across west London.

Feedback from attendees:

A total of 16 feedback forms were completed.

1. Overall, how would you rate the session?

Very bad	Bad	Average	Good	Excellent
0	0	2	3	7

2. Did you know about high blood pressure & the risk factors before attending the workshop?

Yes, I heard about it and knew the risk factors	Yes, I heard about it but did not know about the risk factors	No, this is the first time I have heard about it
15	0	2

3. Did you know about the health problems high blood pressure can cause before attending the workshop?

Yes, I heard about it and knew the health problems it could cause	Yes, I heard about it, but did not know the health problems it caused	No, this is the first time I have heard about it
11	2	2

What worked well and what could be done better next time?

- To give more advice about diet
- Meeting people and connecting
- All good
- To give more advice about diet
- If doctor explains more not asking from people sitting
- Already know don't follow advice - better - more from GP

- People should be referred to 'One you'
- Need more sessions
- Maybe next time more session
- More session
- Demonstrations were good