

FAO: Baroness Hallett
Chair of the Covid-19 Inquiry

Your Ref: Covid-19 Public Inquiry
Our Ref: CDK/IGY/0309
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By email only to: chambers@18ric.co.uk; halletth@parliament.uk
cc: contact@covid19.public-inquiry.uk; publicinquiries@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Dear Baroness Hallett

Covid-19 Public Inquiry

We act on behalf of FEMHO, whom we've been assisting to prepare for the upcoming Covid-19 Inquiry. By this token, we acknowledge your letter to them dated 28 February 2022, where you expressed a keenness to meet and discuss relevant matters. We seek a meeting with you to progress these discussions, even as we are mindful that your team is busy setting up office and that there will be a process of public consultation across a range of inquiry topics.

As in FEMHO's introductory letters to you, its published letter in the Guardian dated 16 February 2022 sets out why the disproportionate health outcomes from Covid-19 for BAME clinicians and community should be a matter of high importance for the inquiry. FEMHO, as a consortium of over 50,000 BAME clinicians, healthcare workers, researchers and support staff, considers itself uniquely well-placed to assist in the inquiry's investigations.

We are conscious of how early interventions in the inquiry process, such as we are proposing, have proven critical in other successful inquiries. Early discussions on how stigma shaped the apprehension of risk around AIDS and hepatitis C have been transformative in how the investigation has evolved in the Infected Blood Inquiry (IBI). Saunders Law are currently involved with IBI on behalf of a small cohort that has successfully positioned the role of stigma in shaping risk from the events under investigation. This was done through early representations to the IBI Chair, as well as by our vigorous and consistent advocacy to advance this line of investigation. As experienced inquiry lawyers, we are of the view that important parallels exist between a Covid-19 Inquiry and IBI.

We propose an introductory meeting with a small group of FEMHO's core executive members along with our instructed legal team, led by Leslie Thomas QC. We are strongly of the view that this Covid-19 Inquiry presents an opportunity to embed these issues as part of its investigations, both in a focused thematic way and throughout the broader subject areas, which can provide important lessons for the future.

Yours sincerely

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Cyralia Knight
SAUNDERS LAW