



SBNS Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Statement

The pandemic period has been a difficult time for us all, with Covid-19 laying bare many of the inequalities that already existed in society, including the increased mortality rate of patients and healthcare workers from ethnic minorities; the disproportionate burden of extra childcare placed upon parents, women especially; and increasing the socioeconomic divide.

With this in the background, sportsmen and women are trying to expose and combat the racism they are subjected to; women are raising awareness about the ongoing differences in the way that they are treated and have to act in their everyday lives; and popular television programmes such as Channel 4's "It's a Sin" showed us some of the difficulties faced by the LGBTQ+ community.

Neurosurgery is not immune from these issues. A culture of bullying, exclusion and victimisation has been both whispered in corridors and reported explicitly in our speciality. We welcome the review of the Royal College of Surgeons of England's diversity by Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, much of which will apply to our own Society too.

Therefore, we state that we are proud, within the Society of British Neurological Surgeons and the overall discipline of neurosurgery in the UK and Ireland, to be a diverse group of individuals passionate about their craft and working hard to improve the lives of our patients and the wider society we live in. We strongly believe that our variety of people from different backgrounds is vital to enabling different perspectives and experience to help our Society, and neurosurgery itself, move forward.

The Society of British Neurological Surgeons wants to guide and support progress within our society, units, and for individuals. We want to cultivate an open and encouraging culture, where people feel valued and comfortable to be themselves and be heard in their place of work and within the Society. We set out an ambition as a society to be anti-discriminatory.

We will:

1. Review the diversity across our professional leadership

We are all too aware that the make-up of the leadership roles in our society does not reflect the diversity of our community. As a first step we ask that all those who may have previously considered engaging in SBNS activities or committees but didn't perhaps due to intimidation, or a feeling that they weren't good enough, or that they don't "fit the mould"; to please help us break that mould.

2. Establish an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

To help examine our Society, undertake policy work and provide a point of contact for communication. We welcome diverse contribution to this forum.

3. To engage and consult with neurosurgeons to better understand our community

We will be inviting all neurosurgeons – consultants and trainees, members and non-members - to complete a survey asking questions regarding aspects of their life that we often avoid, including ethnicity, religion, sexuality, bullying and mental health issues. This survey will be anonymous and non-judgemental, and respondents will be welcome to not respond to aspects that they feel uncomfortable completing. However, we do ask that everyone tries to fill in as much as they feel able to. As a Society we want to represent and support everyone, and the more we know about our members and the issues they face, the better we can do that.

4. Establish a mentoring programme

We will consider the establishment of a mentoring programme to improve the support and visibility of neurosurgeons from minority groups so that those at all levels of training, from primary school to consultancy, can feel that a career in neurosurgery is achievable.

5. Continue to review our progress on a regular basis

Over the coming years, there will be many challenges, and we invite everyone to examine and reflect on the behaviours of the SBNS, within their own units, and their own unconscious biases; and challenge those behaviours where they see them.

We know we are nowhere near perfect in achieving equity and diversity, but together, we can improve so please contact us with your ideas or for support.