Evaluation of a programme to increase organ donation among BME communities

The problem:
Members of BME communities are at greater risk of requiring a donated organ and are poorly represented on the organ donor register. Barriers to registration include:
- religious beliefs;
- fears that organs will be removed prior to death; and
- relatives withholding consent following bereavement.

The intervention:
Peer educator project initiated by Kidney Research UK aims to:
- raise awareness of organ donation;
- increase positive attitudes to organ donation; and
- increase BME registration on the organ donor register.
The project was piloted in Harrow and rolled out in Hounslow, Lewisham and Lambeth.

Peer educators are drawn from BME communities and receive accredited training. They utilise existing community channels such as festivals, melas and celebrations to engage with BME populations. In addition to putting up stands they have developed a quiz as an engagement tool to promote discussion.

Evaluation:
Completed by the University of Central Lancashire. More than 800 questionnaires were completed by people who attended events. 54 follow up interviews were conducted with people who indicated that they would sign up to the organ donor register after the event. Qualitative interviews were completed with peer educators who kept reflective diaries.

Findings:
Those who attended events felt that they had learned more about organ donation (75%), that their attitudes had changed (55%) and that they felt more able to talk to family about the issue (58%). 47% said that they were more likely to join the organ donor register.

12% registered on the organ donor register immediately. 11% expressed a strong inclination to do so in the near future and 18% indicated that they may do so after they had had time to think. At follow up virtually no respondents had subsequently registered however, although some indicated that they were still thinking about it.

The use of peer educators from similar backgrounds to event attendees appears to ease discussion of religious and cultural barriers and to facilitate access to events that otherwise would be difficult to access.

Conclusion:
Targeted interventions aimed at BME communities using peer educators can have an impact in raising awareness, changing attitudes and increasing organ donor registration. Increases in organ donor registration are most likely to be achieved immediately however, with little impact being achieved after events. It is possible that additional follow up work with those who indicated that they were still thinking about organ donor registration might have some impact.

Contact:
Jez Buffin, School of Social Work, University of Central Lancashire JBuffin@uclan.ac.uk