



**Newham African Caribbean Carers Forum & the BA joint event  
Tuesday 8 November 2005  
Dana Centre**

The BA and the Newham African Caribbean Carers Forum (NACCF) took part in the DISC project (Delivering Inclusion in Science Communication), and following on from a series of workshops formed a partnership. The aims of the partnership are different for each organisation; for the BA it is to link up with the African Caribbean community whereas the NACCF want to be inspired by science and see how science is a part of their lives.

The two organisations met in August 2005 to discuss possibilities for an event and to find out what the NACCF want. An event was scheduled for Tuesday 8 November 2005 to be held at the Dana Centre, as the NACCF liked the idea of getting out of their local area of Stratford. The audience will be made up of members of the NACCF, although it was opened up to other care groups via the Primary Care Trust. Other audience members will include those who work in the science communication field in the SW7 area – the Natural History Museum, Science Museum, European Dana Alliance for the Brain and the V&A museum – to encourage further links. The event will consist of a talk from a medical doctor, followed by Q&A session then a tour of the Science Museum next door.

There were a few challenges that the partnership faced. At the beginning, neither organisation could see any obvious ways that we could link up, but this was soon overcome when we met to discuss what each organisation does. Also, communication is by telephone only as email is not possible which means things take a little longer to confirm.

Meeting the members of the NACCF face to face was a success as it provided an opportunity to really find out what each organisation wants to get out of the partnership. After the initial meeting a number of issues were raised that the NACCF were interested in exploring at an event, and at that same meeting a date was scheduled.

## Event summary

Speaker: Dr Anand Saggar  
*Consultant physician, St George's Hospital Medical School*

Chair: Dr Maggie Aderin  
*Scientist and freelance science communicator*

The event was attended by 15 members of the Newham African Caribbean Carers Forum, and they soon settled down in the d.study of the Dana Centre to listen to a brief presentation by Dr Anand Saggar, a consultant physician and specialist in Clinical Genetics at St George's Hospital.

Dr Maggie Aderin, scientist and freelance science communicator, chaired the session and asked everyone to introduce themselves and say where they are from, and what ailment or condition they, or the person they care for, suffer from.

Conditions highlighted included:

Sickle cell disorders, Alzheimer's, dementia, mental health problems, diabetes, Down syndrome, depression, prostate cancer, osteoporosis and "old age".

Dr Saggar then went on to discuss how genetics affects us all and that progress in genetic research such as stem cell research could be one way to cure certain illnesses. Other issues raised included:

- cloning: what can and can't be done
- IVF: our understanding of the genetic basis of life has resulted in many technologies that, for example, can help couples unable to conceive by the conventional method
- chromosomes: male (X & Y chromosome), female (2 X chromosomes) patterns, and how our bodies' cells recognise which chromosome has come from which parent
- nature vs nurture: to what extent are common diseases caused or penetration altered by environmental effects despite our genetic make-up?
- breast cancer: a disease with a strong genetic influence
- mental health: can people who commit suicide be predicted from genetics? The fact that genes are now being identified for depression and schizophrenia.
- Down's syndrome: an easily recognisable genetic disorder and how other genetic conditions can be recognised by their patterns or appearances.
- The meaning and understanding of risk and disease

A relaxed discussion took place as each issue was raised, with the audience asking Anand a number of questions. Other audience members also shared their views and personal experiences as relevant issues were raised.

Following the session, a typical African Caribbean hot lunch was served in the café after which the group were given a tour of one of the galleries in the Science Museum.

One of the highlights is that the BA is linking up with a new audience – Black African Caribbean carers, mainly women, most over 60 years old. It was a great opportunity for audience members to have direct access to a medical doctor, an atmosphere was created where they could ask questions and raise medical issues freely. Another highlight was hearing about where people are from and what they do and who they care for. One strength of this partnership is that both the BA and the NACCF communicate well, keep each other up to date with plans and ideas and therefore trust has formed.

Other organisations such as the European Dana Alliance for the Brain, and the Science Museum are keen to link up with the Newham African Caribbean Carers Forum and form their own partnerships. It is hoped that a long term strategy will be drawn up so that science communication organisations can maintain a good relationship with the NACCF.

## Evaluation

It was especially pleasing, and unusual, that all participants completed an evaluation form.

93% rated the venue as excellent (100% good/excellent)

60% rated the chairing by Maggie Aderin as excellent (80% good/excellent)

87% rated the talk by Anand Saggar as excellent (87% good/excellent)

67% rated the science museum tour as excellent (87% good/excellent)

73% rated the overall experience as excellent (87% good/excellent)

**Overall satisfaction for the event was rated as good or excellent by 80% of participants.**

The talk by Anand Saggar was the thing that people liked most about the day, followed closely by "everything". People commented on how warm and inclusive the event was, how informative, the discussion, the museum tour and one person liked meeting everyone and hearing what they did and who they look after.

Most participants (67%) did not say what they liked least about the event. Of those that did comment, having nowhere to sit during the Science Museum tour, not having enough time, being late, and wanting a cup of tea were noted.

The ethnic mix of the audience was:

- 67% Black Caribbean
- 13% Black African
- 7% black other
- 7% white British
- 7% did not specify

Therefore, 87% were non white British.

All of the participants were female.

The age groups represented were as follows:

Under 36s	0%
36 – 45	7%
46 – 60	27%
60+	53%
did not reply	13%

Other comments about the event overall included:

- should do this more often
- would like an opportunity to do more next time
- will come again