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**Authors**: Mughal F, Kingstone T

**Corresponding author**: **Dr Faraz Mughal**, NIHR In-Practice Fellow and GP, Research Institute for Primary Care and Health Sciences, Keele University, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG

Dr Tom Kingstone, Research Associate, Research Institute for Primary Care and Health Sciences, Keele University, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG and South Staffordshire and Shropshire NHS Foundation Trust, Stafford, ST16 3SR

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**Encouraging smoking cessation in Ramadan in primary care**

Dear Editor,

Globally, Muslims fast in the month of Ramadan; a month where food, drink, and sexual relations are controlled.(1) Ramadan is a month of worship and spirituality and promotes impulse control which is a core concept of fasting. One is not allowed to smoke whilst fasting in the day. Ramadan, is therefore an excellent opportunity, to intervene in smokers who fast by promoting smoking reduction as an initial step to cessation.(2) 14% of Pakistanis and 16% of Bangladeshis are current cigarette smokers in England. (3) National data does however suggest that Muslim adults are the least likely to quit smoking compared to individuals with Christian, other, or no religious beliefs. (4) The primary care setting could play an important role in facilitating smoking cessation in Muslims in Ramadan.

In 2018, Ramadan begins mid-May and will last for approximately 30 days with fasts expected to last around 17 hours. Smokers may struggle initially with nicotine withdrawal symptoms at the commencement of Ramadan and therefore a slow reduction in nicotine prior to Ramadan in motivated smokers including smokeless tobacco, waterpipe tobacco, and e-cigarette users in conjunction with promoting mindfulness based relapse prevention techniques during Ramadan may help. (5)

Primary care services are often the first point of call for patients and smoking cessation is regularly delivered within this setting. (6) A Malay religiously sensitive behavioral smoking cessation intervention during Ramadan was effective in maintaining post-Ramadan smoking reduction.(7) Such interventions have yet to be piloted within the United Kingdom. Community gatherings of fast opening, night prayers, and worship, offer fasters who smoke ways of distraction and heighten internal strength to overcome cravings.(2)

Healthcare professionals in primary care should briefly ask about smoking in fasting patients they consult. A short reminder of the opportunity to reduce smoking in Ramadan and adequate signposting to smoking cessation services, self-help guides, as well advocating harm reduction techniques such as nicotine replacement therapy and e-cigarette use outside of fasting times may all help in facilitating smoking cessation in smokers during and importantly post-Ramadan. Further research is required on developing culturally and religiously acceptable and feasible behavioural interventions to support smoking reduction and cessation before, during, and post-Ramadan.

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