

## **NEON (Nurture Early for Optimal Nutrition) video transcript**

[Music]

### **Prof. Monica Lakhanpaul, Lead investigator of the NEON study:**

The NEON project stands for Nurture Early for Optimal Nutrition. It's a project that focuses on children aged six months to two years. The aim of the project is to start early in a child's life, to prevent long term problems later. If we improve feeding practices when the child is young we can prevent obesity, heart disease and diabetes and other deficiencies such as vitamin D or iron deficiency as the child grows into adulthood. The project - what we are doing at the moment - is working together with the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets. However this model, or this approach that we're designing, we would want to be able to adapt it to other communities because all children want to grow up to be healthy.

### **NEON Study Patient Public Involvement Member 1:**

Healthy nutrition is definitely very important for me and Zakaria. Only when I understood it better - when he was first born I didn't understand any of it.

**NEON Study Community Facilitator 1:** It's extremely important because nutrition and well-being of your child is at the foremost for any mother.

### **Prof. Monica Lakhanpaul:**

So really we met with that outward community from Tower Hamlets and we met with some of the doctors and some of the health visitors, and the people who commission the services, and it was clear that there are lots of interventions going on for the older children, children who were five years up, but there's very little happening for children between the early years - six months to two years.

### **NEON Study Community Facilitator 1:**

The advice needs to be tailored to the needs of the community and the culture - bearing that in mind, [I] would say that the Bangladeshi population in Tower Hamlets are addicted to rice because they see rice as something that has to be in the diet to be, to grow healthy, to actually fill you up, to actually give you the energy and so forth and somebody said they actually give fried rice for breakfast to their children, to their child, because they don't see anything wrong with it.

### **NEON Study Patient Public Involvement Member 1:**

When a mother told me that she had given her child mango juice in a bottle to feed it throughout the night, because the child's constipated, so it's a vicious circle she was only trying to help a child so it's, like, she didn't do it to harm the child, but for the child's benefit, but at the end it cost the child six teeth.

### **NEON Study Patient Public Involvement Member 2:**

We are taught to sit in one place and eat because also there's an Islamic aspect, you know, you shouldn't be running around, should sit down and eat in one place. I distract my son with everything that I can think of, just to have his vegetables. So I'll slide the carrot in

and he said 'Mummy, you just put something in my mouth!' but playing with them while they're eating - it's always there.

**Dr Lorna Benton, Co-Investigator of the NEON Study:**

Part of the reason that we're doing this project actually is to reach members of the population that might not ordinarily be exposed to any programmes, and one thing that really helped our project I think was the community support. So we worked with some wonderful facilitators and they themselves are adult representatives of the Bangladeshi population from Tower Hamlets and they helped us with every stage of the research.

**NEON Study Community Facilitator 2:**

We find out that .... in the Bangladeshi community - more diabetes, more heart disease, more obesity is happening. So this study aimed to identify the main root, main reason, for the feeding style, food habit, in leading to the disease.

**Dr Lorna Benton, Co-Investigator of the NEON Study:**

We spoke to mothers, pregnant women, fathers, members of the community in general. And we spoke to health professionals a lot, and they all shared this idea of filling the belly. And filling the belly came to mean there was a lot of anxiety around making sure that the baby ate some food and I think that links to another concept that we spoke a lot about, which is the idea that a healthy baby is a chubby baby.

**NEON Study Patient Public Involvement Member 2:**

I think family and everybody has advice to give - my mum, my dad...

**NEON Study Patient Public Involvement Member 1:**

If you break the norms, cultural norms, and if you break the norms, this child is, you know, you're, you're a bad parent and you're not listening to advice and that's why your child's ill.

**Dr Lorna Benton, Co-Investigator of the NEON Study:**

I think it's really important that we recognise the role that mothers play, and fathers play, the mothers-in-law that lived with the, the new mother, everyone has experience and their influence can really be positive as well, and I think that the advice that families share can be very supportive in advising what kind of food to give the new baby, and when to introduce these foods. You'll find that there's actually a lot of knowledge within the family or within the wider community, and we're not reinventing the wheel. What we want to do is make sure that the information and knowledge is shared between family members and health professionals and anyone really with a role in complementary feeding.

**NEON Study Patient Public Involvement Member 1:**

The community have responded really well to the NEON study. They seem all very interested. At first they couldn't quite understand, you know, if there was a right and wrong if, why do they want to know all this, but when I explained they were, like, 'oh okay, wow, does our opinion really matter' and if there's no right and wrong you know, I like to express my views quite openly.

**Prof. Monica Lakhanpaul:**

We try to look at models that we could look at in these results, poor countries, and think how could we use that within the UK, in our setting, in a town or a city, here like Tower Hamlets. We've looked at Nepal, we've looked to India, we've looked at Bangladesh. We've taken some of the learning from some of similar interventions, which have been shown to be very successful in those settings, and now we're adapting that and testing that out in Tower Hamlets with the Bangladeshi community.

**NEON Study Community Facilitator 2:**

When I spoke to the people of the community they are very much interested about the NEON study because they think this study is their study, because it is for their children, how they feed their children.

**Prof. Monica Lakhanpaul:**

Every single child should be engaging in school activities, should be able to run around, feel that they want to run around, have their, enjoy eating food, but be healthy with what they eat, and we want to help them do that. If we leave it too late, then they are already in a position where they don't want to do physical activity, where they don't feel like running around, and so if we start very, very early with these children and give them a good start in life, then hopefully they can have an enjoyable youth and grow up into healthy adults.

**NEON Study Patient Public Involvement Member 1:**

I think the NEON study is very important, definitely come from my sense of my community, because we are always told what to do, what to feed our children and sometimes it's not the right answers.

**NEON Study Community Facilitator 2:**

After four, five years maybe they totally changed the Tower Hamlets - now as a community you can find them, you can say [it's a] healthy community in London, Tower Hamlets.

[Screen text]: "Thank you to the funders and partners who supported the NEON study and the making of this film, including Tower Hamlets local authority, National Institute for Health Research Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care North Thames, the British Heart Foundation & Women and Children First."

[Music]

[Screen text]:

UCL Would like to thank the research team.

Principal Investigator Prof. Monica Lakhanpaul

Co-Investigators: Dr Lorna Benton, Dr Edward Fotrell, Dr Michelle Heys, Dr Georgia Black, Dr Sonia Ahmed, Dr Taryn Smith, Oliver Lloyd Houldey, Jenifer Martin.

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Directed and Edited by Dr Kartik Sharma

Music Credit

“Dhaka” Music & courtesy by Kevin MacLeod

“Folk Instrumental” Music & courtesy by Hyde