Tell me about your research
I look at dementia services and Urdu speakers’ experiences when they’re being diagnosed with dementia.

The tests used for diagnosis rely a lot on culture and language. For example, a question in the test asks people to recognise an image of a kangaroo but not everyone has grown up seeing or knowing what a kangaroo is. But if they get this question wrong they might be told they have dementia. This means people might get diagnosed with dementia even if they don’t have it because of cultural misunderstandings. People might also not get diagnosed properly because everyone assumes their problems are because of culture and language issues. There are also other problems such as the meaning of words and sentences being lost in translation.

I look at Urdu speakers’ experience and also talk to staff to see what can be improved. I’m working on a new test in Urdu as well as new staff training.

What motivates you?
I sort of fell into this area of research but have grown more passionate along the way. I originally didn’t want to work in dementia as I thought it would feel hopeless, but I ended up getting really interested in the topic. Seeing other South Asians, including my grandma, experiencing dementia was also part of my motivation.

Are there any myths about your work which bother you?
A lot of South Asian communities think dementia is just normal ageing, a punishment from God or black magic, rather than caused by disease. Many don’t realise how important a healthy lifestyle is. Some are worried their community will find out or their information will be passed on to the government if they take part in research.

In an ideal world, where do you see your work in the future?
I’d like to see my work for changing dementia tests to suit other languages and other cultures being used for other kinds of health tests too. I would also like to see the work I do in my PhD maybe one day be used in the NHS.

About the artwork
There’s a strong sense of people trying to navigate a confusing maze of dementia diagnosis in Nadine’s work. She also talked about women bearing the brunt of dementia care in South Asian communities which I wanted to represent. The border is inspired by Nadine’s project logo - Hana

This project was kindly funded by: