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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Junior Doctors should have a parallel postgraduate student contract

All of us are acutely aware of the low level of training opportunity that is now available to Junior Doctors.

The big mistake is in accepting that everything the trainees do is "work" and hence European Working Time Directive (EWTD) applies to it all.

But Junior Doctor training is an apprenticeship which is a combination of service (work) and training/learning. Hence these should be formally distinguished, and EWTD should apply only to the work part.

For example, an SpR should have the stipulated 48 (or 30!) hours per week of WORK and another 30 of 40 (or as many as we + they decide are required) hours per week of LEARNING which is formally timetabled and NOT counted as work. Or better – we formally stipulate that 40% of the time a Junior Doctor is in the hospital he/she is purely learning and 60% is purely working. This may sound artificial, but is necessary for protecting the very existence of

surgical and medical training. If that is accepted – then they can be around to learn for 66% longer. So out of the 80 hours a trainee is in the hospital, 48 hours is work and 32 hours is learning. OR, of the 90 hours a trainee is in the hospital, 54 hours is work and 36 hours is learning or postgraduate studentship. Of course, no salary need be paid for these learning/postgraduate studentship hours, and they are not included in the EWTD hours count.

Such work + postgraduate studentship will then match the training most of us have undergone; and if implemented the eager trainees will be "allowed" to be in their alma mater – the place of learning – the hospital – long enough for adequate training/education.

This is a simple concept, but if this model works, it could be applied to the rest of the World.

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