



The Royal College of Emergency Medicine

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PRESS STATEMENT – 25 April 2016

The Royal College of Emergency Medicine's response to proposed industrial action by junior doctors

The Royal College of Emergency Medicine greatly regrets the impasse that characterises the current industrial dispute between the BMA and NHS Employers.

As Sir Bruce Keogh has recently said 'This is a watershed moment for the NHS and a difficult time for the medical profession'.

The college is proud of the endeavours of emergency medicine doctors and nurses and never more so than in the last six months which have seen unprecedented pressures on the A&E departments of the UK. At times departments and staff have been overwhelmed. Patient care and outcomes have been the rationale behind the college's campaigns of the past three years.

We are currently asked whether we support industrial action that includes withdrawing emergency cover. The college is of the view that such action is a matter for individual members of the BMA but that members of the college other than junior doctors will endeavour to ensure patient safety is not compromised. In hospitals in which there are too few senior doctors to provide such safety then conscience will dictate the actions of the members of the college.

Where junior doctors continue to provide such cover to ensure patient safety, this must not be regarded by the protagonists in the dispute as anything other than the actions of reasonable people in very difficult circumstances. Providing emergency care to patients neither endorses nor undermines the arguments of any party to the dispute.

Will the strike action affect Emergency departments?

It is anticipated that junior doctors working in Emergency Departments will not work during the two days of industrial action. The reduction in access to other services may result in an increased number of patients attending emergency departments. This will result in longer waiting times for all patients.

Do you support the strike action?

It is not a matter that we would comment on as it is a decision for doctors in general and members of the BMA in particular. It is not an issue within our remit.

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Do you oppose the strike action?

It is a decision for doctors in general and members of the BMA in particular. It is not an issue within our remit.

What would you say to the public?

Given that many routine services will be reduced or unavailable during this action it is probable that A&E departments may be even busier than normal. We would ask patients to consider alternative services such as minor injury units and walk in centres which will be less affected.

However we are confident that we will provide the necessary time critical care for all emergency patients – anyone who needs emergency care will receive it, but from senior rather than junior doctors.

What will be the impact of industrial action by doctors in training if this includes withdrawing from emergency care?

Should industrial action by doctors in training lead to fewer staff available in the emergency department of a hospital the risks to patients must be offset by redeployment of other staff. In this way we expect patient care and outcomes to be protected.

-Ends-

Contact

For further information, or to speak with a spokesperson for The Royal College of Emergency Medicine (between 9am and 5pm), please contact Luke O'Reilly at luke.oreilly@rcem.ac.uk or on 0207 067 1275.

For out of hours enquiries, please contact Gordon Miles at gordon.miles@rcem.ac.uk or on 07715 456 784.

About the Royal College of Emergency Medicine

The Royal College of Emergency Medicine is the single authoritative body for Emergency Medicine in the UK. Emergency Medicine is the medical specialty which provides doctors and consultants to A&E departments in the NHS in the UK and other healthcare systems across the world.

The Royal College works to ensure high quality care by setting and monitoring standards of care, and providing expert guidance and advice on policy to relevant bodies on matters relating to Emergency Medicine.

The Royal College has over 5,800 fellows and members, who are doctors and consultants in emergency departments working in the health services in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and across the world.