

The College of Emergency Medicine

Creating successful, satisfying and sustainable careers in Emergency Medicine



Summary Guidance for trainees, SAS Doctors and Consultants in Emergency Medicine

Why now?

Emergency Departments (EDs) and the staff working in them are a vital component of any emergency care system. In recent years, there has been increasing recognition that the stresses placed upon staff and especially the senior medical decision makers within an ED are significant and at times can be overwhelming (NHS Confederation report- Emergency care: an accident waiting to happen?). This has been one factor that has affected recruitment to a specialty which is otherwise renowned for its excitement and attractiveness by young doctors. In addition, medical staff today rightly expect a better balance in their working lives to create satisfaction throughout their career.

Much work is ongoing to address issues of system design and appropriate resourcing to improve the working environment in the ED. Until now there has been little guidance on how to improve and sustain the working lives of the senior medical decision maker in the ED and to help ensure that staff can enjoy a successful career.

In recognition of this, the College of Emergency Medicine is pleased to publish a comprehensive strategy to understand and implement approaches that will create workforce resilience for senior medical decision makers working in the ED and more importantly, make the specialty attractive to the emergency physicians of the future.

Why is this important?

- Consultants, SAS doctors and Emergency Medicine trainees need to be able to understand the important principles of good job planning, flexible working patterns and training opportunities that will enhance career development.
- The ways in which senior medical decision makers can best develop their portfolios as they progress through each decade of their clinical career as well as optimising their leadership and team-working skills are key to creating career satisfaction and sustainability.
- Trainees and trainers must ensure that they have produced the best environments for training in the busy setting of the ED. It is critically important to show trainees that their training is a valued part of the departmental function.
- All doctors working in the ED need to understand how to support each other, maintain wellbeing and recognise the early signs of colleagues who may be struggling so that support strategies can be put into place early.

What do emergency physicians need to consider?

All emergency physicians should read the guidance in detail. Local solutions that address some of the issues may already have been successfully delivered. We hope that the guidance will generate discussion and further suggestions will be made for future iterations.

Particular areas of focus within the College strategy include:

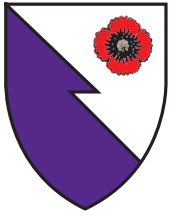
- Work patterns for Emergency Medicine (EM) doctors need to be well-structured and sustainable and to recognise the ways in which out-of-hours commitments in particular can be appropriately recognised.

- Models of ED function have changed enormously over the years as have the approaches that clinicians must consider both to describe the speciality and to profile it to others.
- The importance of flexible working for those choosing to work less than full-time both as trainees and consultants.
- The ways in which careers can be developed proactively throughout each decade of a clinical career to maintain satisfaction and longevity should be considered.
- Tailored strategies to maintain wellbeing and embedding them into daily practice. Using College resources and developing local solutions are key to creating the right environment for the medical workforce in the ED.
- Optimal strategies for working within the unique environment of the multi-disciplinary ED team and how best to develop leadership skills are an important area to consider.

Recommendations to create successful change.

1. **Engagement:** We recommend that the consultant body and clinical directors or Heads of Service actively discuss and agree a strategy that meets their local needs using the guidance. Representation from SAS doctors and trainees is essential. Discussion with senior managers can then occur. It is essential for teams to **actively engage** and set aside resources to develop an appropriate implementation plan.
2. **Prioritisation:** Sustainable working practices for the medical workforce in the ED must occupy a **high priority within the urgent and emergency care agenda** for commissioners and provider trust executive teams. Resources must be re-allocated from temporary spend strategies to address deficiencies. In the medium term, this will be money well spent and will create longer term savings.
3. **Sustainable working practices:** The importance of creating **sustainable working practices** for emergency physicians cannot be over-stated. The ED has the most intense hospital working environment for senior staff and working patterns must be appropriately recognised and remunerated. Through excellent design and leadership of such practices, high performing EDs are able to deliver the very best quality of clinical care. Fragile systems will need to produce enhanced recruitment and retention strategies until they are able to embed such good working practices within their systems.
4. **Maintaining wellbeing:** Implementation of the guidance will **help lead to a happier and more productive workforce**. Failure to do so will increase the attrition and sickness rate of the senior (and junior) workforce leading to further fragility within systems that will compromise the safety of care for patients. Harm can also occur to providers as 'career burnout' amongst emergency physicians is the highest of all medical specialties.
5. **Wider system solutions:** The College of Emergency Medicine has proactively produced clear guidance for the wider system (Acute and emergency care: prescribing the remedy 2014 and The Drive for Quality 2013). This guidance is vital in order to create the **right environment** for the delivery of emergency care and forms a key adjunct to also help create workforce resilience.

*Please visit the College website [Creating successful, satisfying and sustainable careers in Emergency Medicine](#) to read the **FULL REPORT***



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