



Association of British Neurologists

ABN Trainees Committee

18th February 2016

Dear Johann

I am writing on behalf of the Association of British Neurologists Trainees (ABNT) committee, which represents the views of UK neurology trainees. I wrote to the BMA JDC in a letter dated 17th September 2015 to express the ABNT committee's concerns regarding the DDRB recommendations and their implications if implemented in a new Junior Doctors' contract, and to voice our support for the BMA JDC's position on this. We are grateful for the enormous effort that the BMA JDC has put in to negotiating a fair and safe contract and are pleased to see that some of the concerns we expressed in my last letter have been addressed, such as the acknowledgement of the acquisition of academic and other specialist skills during periods of out-of-programme training. However, other concerns remain unaddressed.

In particular the ABNT committee remains concerned about:

1. **Thinning of services:** We do not agree that evenings and Saturdays should be designated "normal" working hours. Spreading out services in this way will lead to thinning of services during the current working week and will be to the overall detriment of patient care.
2. **Lack of safeguards:** Although progress has been made on many aspects of safeguarding of hours worked in the government's current imposed contract, the status of non-resident on-call shifts does not adequately acknowledge that a non-resident on-call shift can be very busy. The majority of neurology registrars work non-resident on-call shifts because their numbers are generally too small in any one location to be able to provide a resident on-call presence without adversely affecting provision of day-time services. Nevertheless, the number of telephone calls for advice can be high, leading to a night shift or a weekend shift that is almost as busy as a resident shift would be. Yet the remuneration is disproportionately less than a resident shift, and the provision for rest after such a shift is none. Indeed under the proposed contract it would be possible to be rostered for non-resident on-call night shifts whilst also working regular day shifts, with almost no sleep or provision for rest between shifts. This is clearly not safe for patients or fair for junior doctors.

The ABNT committee deplores the recent decision of the Secretary of State for Health to impose a contract that does not address junior doctors' concerns and fully endorses the views expressed in the Open Letters of the Trainees Representatives of the Royal College of Physicians and of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges' Trainee Doctors' Group, dated 16th February 2016.

The ABNT committee continues to support the BMA JDC's position to oppose the current government contract offer, on the above grounds, and hopes that a negotiated settlement can still be reached, for the sake of patients, the NHS and junior doctors.

Yours sincerely

Alexander Foulkes,
Chair of the ABNT committee, on behalf of UK neurology trainees

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