

Sharp rise in consultants opting for early retirement as dissatisfaction with the NHS grows

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The number of consultants taking voluntary early retirement in 2011 has shot up by nearly three quarters compared with 2010, according to a report by *BMJ* Careers today.

The BMA believes this high rate reflects the growing [dissatisfaction](#) among consultants with the changes underway in the NHS.

Based on new data from the NHS Business Services Authority Pensions Division, the report shows that the proportion of consultants taking voluntary early retirement before the age of 60 has leapt by 72.4% in the past year, from 98 doctors in 2010 to 169 in 2011. Over the past five years the proportion of consultants taking [early retirement](#) has almost doubled from 7.3% in 2006 to 14.0% in 2011.

Ian Wilson, deputy chairman of the BMA's Consultants Committee, said increasingly long hours and intensity of work, partly due to the drop in junior doctors' availability following new working time restrictions; changes to NHS pensions; and reform of the NHS are collectively making many consultants opt for retirement at the earliest possible opportunity.

"Anecdotally doctors are telling us all the time that if they could retire they would retire, whereas in the past doctors tended to want to carry on for as long as they were able to," he says. "People are feeling

disempowered by NHS structures and NHS functioning, and there's an attraction for people to retire from the rat race."

Many consultants are frustrated with the way the health service is changing, partly as a result of the ongoing reforms set out in the Health and Social Care bill, and other changes that are taking place, said Dr Wilson. Furthermore the changes planned for [public sector](#) pensions - such as increased contribution rates and the end of final [salary](#) pensions—are driving consultants to take retirement now rather than stay while the government's proposals play out, he said.

According to the NHS Business Services Authority, this increase is driven in part by the rise in the size of the consultant workforce, which has grown by 4.5% year on year over the past 10 years, and the changing age profile of consultants.

Provided by British Medical Journal

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