

Junior doctors vote to strike in UK

November 19 2015

Junior doctors in Britain voted Thursday to stage their first "all-out" strikes in the history of the National Health Service (NHS) in a fierce pay row with the government.

Almost 28,000 junior doctors cast their vote, with 98 percent in favour of strikes and two percent against, the British Medical Association (BMA) said.

They will conduct a 24-hour strike on December 1, providing only [emergency care](#).

But there will be full walkouts between 8.00am and 5.00pm on December 8 and December 16, threatening mass disruption to the NHS and the cancellation of outpatient clinics and non-urgent operations.

Junior doctors are qualified [medical practitioners](#) who are working while studying for postgraduate qualifications to become consultants or general practitioners.

They make up around half of the medical workforce in Britain.

They are angry about new contracts being implemented next year which will cut the number of shifts which are classed as "unsociable"—weekends and nights—and paid at a premium rate.

In lieu, the government has offered an 11-percent wage hike on normal shifts, but doctors maintain they will still lose out.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has called the action "totally unwarranted" while a spokeswoman for Prime Minister David Cameron's Downing Street office said they wanted to "find a way through through on this" and urged further talks on the issue.

Mark Porter, chairman of the BMA, said that while it regretted the "inevitable disruption" the action would cause, "it is the government's adamant insistence on imposing a contract that is unsafe for patients in the future, and unfair for doctors now and in the future, that has brought us to this point."

Ron Singer, of the Medical Practitioners' Union, added: "The last time junior doctors were driven to take drastic action was 1975, so doctors do not take such decisions lightly nor without due cause."

In that year, [junior doctors](#) staged mass strike action, but still provided emergency care.

Patient groups warned that lives could be put at risk.

"This is the worst news for patients in the history of the NHS," said Roger Goss, of the campaign group Patient Concern.

Since taking office in 2010, Cameron has pushed through a string of reforms to the NHS, which was founded in 1948 and provides healthcare which is largely free at the point of delivery.

But these have been criticised by many doctors and nurses, while leading health think-tank The King's Fund called the reforms "distracting and damaging" in a study earlier this year.

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