

UK medical bodies say winter crisis costing lives

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UK medical bodies on Monday said patients were dying due to inadequate care and urged the government to act as Britain's health service grapples with a winter crisis of strikes and soaring demand.

The public National Health Service (NHS) faced budget constraints for more than a decade before the COVID-19 pandemic left it severely stretched.

One in every five [patients](#) picked up by an ambulance in England last week took more than an hour to be admitted to emergency care, while tens of thousands waited more than 12 hours before receiving treatment there.

The Royal College of Emergency Medicine on Sunday said between 300 and 500 patients would die each week in [emergency care](#), notably due to long waiting times.

Its [vice president](#) stood by the prediction on Monday, rejecting suggestions that short-term factors had caused the crisis, after some hospital officials nuanced the claim.

"If you're at the front line, you know this is a longstanding problem... the sort of things we're seeing happen every winter, and it still seems to come as a surprise," Ian Higginson told BBC radio.

The British Medical Association (BMA) on Monday called the current situation "intolerable and unsustainable" as the NHS faces "incredibly high levels of demand" and said the [government](#) must act.

"It is just not true that the cost of resolving this mess cannot be afforded by this country. This is a political choice and patients are dying unnecessarily because of that choice," said BMA UK council chair Phil Banfield.

The government has attributed the strains on the NHS to the consequences of the pandemic and winter illnesses such as flu.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in his New Year's message said his administration had taken "decisive action" and mobilized "record resources" to tackle NHS backlogs and staffing pressures.

But the government recently embarked on a policy of budget savings and has rejected salary hikes demanded by nurses as UK inflation has run above 10 percent for months.

Nurses went on strike for the first time in their union's history last month.

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