

The Patients Association raises grave concerns over planned resident doctors' strike's impact on patients

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For immediate release

Five days of further strike action: how long will patients be made to pay the price?

Ahead of the scheduled resident doctors' industrial action, between 14th - 19th November, the Patients Association is setting out its grave concerns over the strike's devastating impact on patients, in advance of what could be one of the 'toughest' winters ever faced by the NHS.

The human cost of an overstretched NHS is already visible: patients are deteriorating on trolleys, care is compromised in overcrowded wards, and people are waiting in pain for tests and treatments that keep being delayed. A five-day strike will make this worse. Yet despite endless talk of putting patients first, patients are the ones bearing the consequences.

During the summer's strike action, patients told us about the agony of having their appointments cancelled at short notice, after having waited 'months' for it. One patient had previously been told their procedure was urgent and that it had to be completed within 8 weeks, otherwise they could lose sight in their eye, and yet their appointment was still cancelled. Imagine being that patient, imagine the fear of not knowing whether you'll go blind in one eye because of a resident doctors' strike.

Already we know that just the intention of industrial action, and the back-and-forth argument between the BMA and the government, will be causing anxiety and distress for patients' and carers' mental health. Should yet another resident doctors strike go ahead this week, patients will again have to shoulder the consequences. And these will be long-term consequences, as a five-day strike at the threshold of what NHS leaders warn could be the worst flu season on record will create a cascade of delays extending well into the new year. As hospitals struggle to recover from industrial action while simultaneously managing surging flu admissions – already up 60% in one week - patients' appointments and treatments will have to be rescheduled, pushing back that next step necessary for good health. Many patients have spent way beyond an appropriate timeframe on elective waiting lists or in urgent and emergency care waiting rooms, and to delay their care even further is inexcusable.

The BMA has rejected the government's latest offer. While we understand that resident doctors feel their concerns have not been adequately addressed, we must be clear: choosing to strike for five days at this critical moment will cause immense harm to many patients.

Emergency care pathways may be protected, but elective procedures - many of them urgent for patients - will be cancelled once again, adding months more delay to already unacceptable waiting times.

We call on the BMA to reconsider this action and return to negotiations. We call on the government to commence immediate independent arbitration to break this deadlock. Without it, patients will suffer the consequence of a dispute that is not of patients' making. Behind every statistic is a person - a friend, a family member - whose life could be hanging in the balance. Patients deserve better.

Notes to editors

- Speaking at The King's Fund annual conference on 6th November 2025, Sir Jim Mackey, Chief Executive at NHS England said: 'There's no doubt this winter will be one of the toughest our staff have ever faced.'
- The UK Health Security Agency reported on 6th November that 'the overall weekly hospital admission rate for influenza hospitalisations was increasing at 3.81 per 100,000 compared with 2.44 per 100,000 in the previous week'.
- For interviews, comment or further information, please contact: media@patients.association.org.uk

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The Patients Association is an independent patient charity campaigning for improvements in health and social care for patients. We believe patients should be actively involved in decisions made about their care and in the design of the health and care system. As an independent charity campaigning for improvements in health and social care, we believe improvements can only be achieved if the system works in partnership with patients. Through our helpline and information services we provide information to thousands of people each year about the health and social care system, enabling them to advocate for themselves.

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