

Junior Doctors in Britain Begin the Longest-Ever Strike



Junior doctors in England staged a walkout on Wednesday. This is set to be the longest strike over pay in the history of the National Health Service (NHS).

The strike is likely to further exacerbate the challenges faced by the already beleaguered NHS. Concerns are mounting about the potential ripple effect of cancelled medical appointments and surgeries due to this strike, which commenced at 7 a.m. and is expected to last six days - until 7 a.m. on Tuesday.

This labour action marks the lengthiest protest undertaken by these doctors, who have been at odds with the government regarding wages and working conditions since December 2022. The timing is particularly precarious for the health sector as it is already grappling with increased admissions related to the flu and other ailments, as well as crowded emergency rooms and outpatient clinics.

According to the union, junior doctors earn 15.53 pounds (\$19.37) an hour. The minimum wage in the UK is just over 10 pounds an hour, but for most employees, salaries rise after the first year. The striking junior doctors and physicians still in clinical training are demanding a 35% wage hike, asserting that it is essential to offset a real wage reduction of over 25% since 2008. While the government has resolved pay disputes with nurses and ambulance workers, negotiations with the union representing these young doctors have proven difficult.

The NHS is already dealing with a daunting waiting list for procedures, ballooning to 7.7 million individuals from 4.6 million pre-pandemic. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's commitment to reducing waiting times, a fundamental goal of his Conservative government, has not materialised, with the list growing by an additional 300,000 people. Analysts estimate that previous strikes by senior and junior doctors contributed to an increase of approximately 210,000 people on the waiting list due to missed appointments. The ongoing walkout could escalate the number of cancelled appointments and operations to over a million.

Junior doctors constitute approximately half of the physicians in the NHS, meaning their absence affects the entire system, from emergency rooms to operating theatres. These doctors cite grievances such as long working hours, unrelenting pressure, and inadequate pay that has not kept pace with recent inflation.

Source: [ABC News](#), [The New York Times](#)

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Published on : Wed, 3 Jan 2024