
LETTER

Dear Editor,

It is well recognised that as our junior doctors move from hospital to hospital they are exposed to local pathogens and gradually build up their own immunity. This is especially true in paediatrics and many come down with 'a viral illness' in the first few weeks of their new job. This winter 56% of our FY1s in a paediatric hospital required sick leave in the first six weeks of the post following the December changeover. They accrued a necessary 125 locum hours compared to zero percent sick leave in the same period by Senior House Officers and Specialist Registrars within the same department who had changed jobs several months earlier.

I postulate that changeover in December coinciding with the winter peaks in many paediatric infectious illnesses does not allow doctors to develop their own immunity.

This is not simply an inconvenience but a real cost to the NHS. Even on a Band 2A rota there is very little ability for 'cross-over' without compromising the care of patients or bringing in locums. Will it be necessary for paediatric hospitals to put aside a 'Winter Sickness Budget' for this eventuality? Aside from cost, FY1s are based in any one department for 12 weeks. What impact will sick leave have on training?

I am pleased to say all our FY1s have recovered!

Yours sincerely,

E Stormer

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