UK Doctors on Strike: how it may impact England’s Hospitals

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Junior doctors threaten to strike, NHS straining under government cuts and winter viruses shutting many wards across the country “it’s not an easy time to be a hospital employee.

(Newswire.net -- December 2, 2015) -- Hospitals are always first in line to receive a thrashing from tabloid journalists. These attacks have intensified in the past few years, not least because of a Conservative government hostile to any institution that hasn’t been privatised.

The increased pressure on staff in hospitals has led to threats of strike action from junior doctors, prompted by pay cuts and changes in contracts from Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt.

Although the walkouts have been tabled after a breakthrough in talks, the threat from junior doctors led to the postponement of over 600 surgical operations and 3,500 outpatient operations, according to the Press Association.

A public statement

According to the Guardian, negotiators released this joint statement: “We intend to reach a collaborative agreement, working in partnership to produce a new contract for junior doctors, recognising their central role in patient care and the future of the NHS.

“All parties are committed to reaching an agreement that improves safety for patients and doctors and therefore NHS Employers have agreed to extend the timeframe for the BMA to commence any industrial action by four weeks to 13 January 2016 at 1700, to allow negotiations to progress.

“Within that timetable, the BMA agrees to temporarily suspend its proposed strike action and the Department of Health agrees similarly to temporarily suspend implementation of a contract without agreement.

“All parties acknowledge that they share responsibility for the safety of patients and junior doctors, which must be paramount.”

The effect of strikes

Negotiations are, then, at a tentative stage, and the threat of strike action is still possible. If they were to take place, what would hospitals have to rely on for their safe operation?

Much of the heft of day-to-day activity would fall into the hands of ancillary staff, nurses in particular. However, especially in winter, this could prove risky.

Various infectious diseases may not be detected instantly, including the Norovirus, leading to multiple ward closures at a time when the number of people admitted to hospital increases.

The minutiae of hospital business would continue unaffected. Healthcare waste disposal would remain, usually fulfilled by private contractors, and cleaners would continue to make hospitals as clinically hygienic as possible.

Whatever the outcome, junior doctors feel the strikes are necessary unless their demands are met. Hunt, on the other hand, has accused them of placing patients in danger. However negotiations turn out, quality standards in the NHS are still hanging the balance.

Source: http://newswire.net/newsroom/news/00091200-uk-doctors-may-strike.html