

Policy on Medical Student Duty Hours

Medical students in the final two years of their education should be expected to assume a level of supervised patient care responsibility commensurate with their level of training and their demonstrated clinical skills. In order to advance their clinical competency and prepare them for postgraduate medical education, this level of responsibility should be established at the highest level that is consistent with exemplary patient care and safety.

In addition to advancing their clinical skills, medical students must have ample opportunity to consolidate their learning through self-study. Their level of clinical responsibility should allow adequate time for study, review, and preparation for required formative and summative evaluations. Finally, student responsibilities should be commensurate with a balanced life-style that allows adequate time for other non-educational tasks and healthy behaviors.

NJMS recognizes the effects of fatigue and sleep deprivation on learning, clinical activities, and health and safety. Therefore, we are committed to providing meaningful educational experiences within the limits of the following medical student duty hour standards:

- Student duty hours should conform to the current ACGME standards applied to resident education. Specifically, students should not exceed an AVERAGE 80 hour weekly schedule across any four week period. All required clinical and scheduled educational and assessment activities are to be included in the duty hour estimates. Students should not be required to exceed 24 continuous duty hours plus 4 additional hours for patient turnover.*
- Students must be allowed 1 full day off in 7 averaged over 4 weeks. Teaching days, examination days, and other scheduled educational activities do not count as days off. However, time spent on reading and independent self-study does count as time off from scheduled duty hours.
- Students must not be required to complete overnight call on the evening prior to an examination or performance-based assessment.
- Duty-free intervals between assigned clinical/educational activities should be at least 8 hours long.
- Mandatory NJMS holidays (these apply to third year students ONLY) may be counted as days off in compliance with the “1 in 7” policy.
- Call rooms will be available for all students who feel too fatigued to safely get home.

*Limited and carefully justified exceptions to this policy may be permissible. It is recognized that students do not work the consistently demanding and lengthy hours of resident physicians. In addition, their educational experiences in many areas are of limited duration. Maximizing their opportunity to experience some clinical or educational opportunities may from time to time justify exceeding the normal duty hours policy. Examples of justifiable exceptions might include, but are not limited to, the following :

- A student-initiated request to participate in or observe a medical activity or procedure that must occur beyond the 80 hour policy.
- A student-initiated request to waive or alter the ‘days off’ policy in order to accommodate a special event (e.g. attend a special conference, attend a wedding, birth, or funeral, etc) or ensure continuity of care or experience with a particularly valuable or interesting clinical case.

This policy was revised by the NJMS Clinical Curriculum Advisory Subcommittee on 5/7/14; approved by the Committee on Curriculum and Academic Programs and Policies 5/2014 and by Faculty Council on 5/14/14.