

# Department of Medicine

## Fatigue and Fit for Duty Policies

### FIT FOR DUTY

## “Know thy Body”

While we all share a responsibility in monitoring fitness for duty for any employee/student at Upstate, there is no more important “fitness evaluator” than the individual him/herself.

You are unfit for work if under the influence of any illicit substance or alcohol; I would also argue that it is unprofessional (and, thus, grounds for Academic Deficiency/Probation) to be imbibing on any legal or illegal substance that you know will prohibit you from carrying out your responsibilities in a safe manner. You must also remain cognizant of legally prescribed or over-the-counter medications as they too can adversely impact your abilities to carry out your job via their effects on your physical and mental well-being.

In addition to legal or illegal substances affecting fitness for duty, there are “every-day” situations that may affect your ability to work, and they don’t necessarily have to have a negative connotation. Obvious “negatives” would include loss/illness of a loved one, the ending of a relationship, your own acute illness, an exacerbation of an underlying chronic condition, or suicidal/homicidal ideations. Other situations, that most would consider “positive” in their overall impact but a stress just the same would include marriage, having a baby, and moving into a new home. You need to look within yourself to determine whether any of these situations could impact your ability to work and, if so, how to deal with the situation so that patient care is never compromised.

We must remain vigilant in determining fitness for duty as lives hang in balance, namely your patients’ and your own

This policy is designed to:

- a. Provide guidance to both residents/fellows and supervisors when a resident/fellow is unfit for duty
- b. Provide a schedule of available coverage so that pulls can be made in a fair and equitable manner when needing to relieve those deemed unfit for work.
- c. Delineate the resident’s responsibility for coverage.
- d. It is not designed to change definitions of time off for human resources/payroll purposes. These remain unchanged.**

### **PROCEDURE WHEN NOT FIT FOR DUTY:**

If a post-graduate trainee does not feel fit for duty, the following should be done:

- For Core Housestaff:

- The house officer must contact the on-call Chief Resident (which can be determined by either looking at Amion or contacting the hospital operator).
- The Chief Resident will provide counsel/guidance when needed to the unfit house officer as well as make arrangements for coverage, if needed. Under some circumstances (if signout/handoff is needed), the Chief Resident will ask the unfit house officer to contact the pulled/covering house officer.
- For Fellows:
  - The fellow must contact the Subspecialty Program Director.
  - The Subspecialty Program Director will provide counsel/guidance when needed to the unfit fellow as well as make arrangements for coverage, if needed. Under some circumstances (if signout/handoff is needed), the Subspecialty Program Director will ask the unfit fellow to contact the pulled/covering individual.
- For Chief Residents:
  - The Chief Resident will contact the Core Program Director.
  - The Core Program Director will provide counsel/guidance when needed and ensure that the Chief Resident's responsibilities are covered by the other Chief Residents or by the Program Director.

If a supervisor feels a house officer is unfit for duty, the following should be done:

- For Core Housestaff:
  - The supervisor will contact the Chief Resident who will then determine if the house officer is unfit for work, and, if so, will do as above.
- For Fellows:
  - The supervisor will contact the Subspecialty Program Director who will then determine if the fellow is unfit for work, and, if so, will do as above.
- For Chief Residents:
  - The supervisor will contact the Core Program Director who will then determine if the Chief Resident is unfit for work, and, if so, will do as above.

If a non-supervising colleague/peer feels a house officer is unfit for duty, the following should be done:

- For Core Housestaff:
  - The Chief Resident will be contacted who will then determine if the fellow is unfit for work, and, if so, will do as above.
- For Fellows:
  - The Subspecialty Program Director will be contacted who will then determine if the fellow is unfit for work, and, if so, will do as above.
- For Chief Residents:
  - The Core Program Director will be contacted who will then determine if the Chief Resident is unfit for work, and, if so, will do as above.

For all of the above, the Core Program Director, the Chair of Medicine, and/or the Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education are available to discuss "fitness for work" for any member of the housestaff.

#### **TIME-OFF POLICY:**

Please see the section titled "Time-Off Policy" in the syllabus.

#### **ADDITIONAL NOTIFICATIONS FROM GME:**

1. As a general rule, each resident/fellow will be expected to complete an equal share of weekend and holiday calls. If the resident/fellow is unable to meet this responsibility due to illness or another situation as listed above, the resident/fellow will complete the requisite number of calls at a later date as determined by the Program Director or Chief. It should be understood that receiving return coverage is a courtesy but is not an absolute requirement and may not be possible in all situations. SUNY Upstate Medical University's institutional policy allows employees to be out for a number of sick days

without consequences. It is in this regard that professionalism and courtesy should exist.

NOTE: Repayment of coverage may never result in an ACGME or New York State duty hours regulation violation, no matter what the circumstances.

2. If a resident/fellow is out sick greater than three days, documentation must be brought to the Program Director's attention within 24 hours of returning to work. Documentation needs to show the name, date, time, and place where the resident/fellow was seen. Diagnosis does not need to be disclosed as this information is confidential. Failure to comply with the documentation requirement could lead to comments regarding professionalism in the final evaluation of the resident/fellow or disciplinary action.
3. For extended absences/illness, please refer to the institutional policy on Leaves of Absence available on SUNY Upstate's website. Residents and fellows should be mindful of individual Board requirements that may set limits on the amount of leave one may take at any level. In most cases, vacation time cannot be forfeited for leave.
4. While every attempt will be made to cover a resident or fellow with another resident or fellow, the final authority for patient care and supervision lies with the attending. In all cases when another resident or fellow cannot cover or cannot be reached, the attending on service will provide this coverage.