

Working as an Intern: Master Your Journey with MIPS

Reading time:

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Date created: 20/11/2020

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Tips to help you avoid fatigue, maintain control and reduce medico-legal and regulatory risks. It can also help make the year more rewarding and enjoyable.

Ask for help when you need it

Ask fellow interns, registrars, mentors, supervisors of training, HR, the AMA and your medical indemnity organisation (MDO) – consider obtaining membership with a medical defence organisation (eg MIPS).

Be prepared when asking for assistance

Be totally familiar with your patient's history and be prepared to answer and ask specific questions of both your patient and fellow healthcare practitioners. Consider proposing a treatment plan.

Have a system

Everyone organises their workload differently. It is easy for some and organisation comes naturally. For others, it is a skill to be learnt. Adopting a system that suits you and your workplace is paramount.

Obey the Medical Board code of conduct – Good Medical Practice

There are other guides and policies such as the social media and sexual boundaries guides. If you follow these requirements you and your care are less likely to be criticised.

Seek help when faced with bullying and harassment

Sadly, this might occur and is totally inappropriate and illegal. You are protected by Work Health & Safety legislation. Seek advice and deal with it before matters escalate. Workplace Health and Safety laws apply in every healthcare environment. Sadly, the medical workforce has an historical reputation for bullying and the way interns handle it now will support the wave of change going forward and for those that follow you.

Be professional to everyone

You will need the assistance and cooperation of a wide number of staff from orderlies, nurses, administration staff, peers and senior consultants. Be courteous and professional to both patients and colleagues at all times.

Do not unduly criticise colleagues

This is frowned upon by employers and prohibited by your code of conduct. Deal with concerns professionally. You can still provide feedback in a direct, honest and courteous manner.

Manage your performance management

Your employer and supervisor are entitled to assess you and manage your performance. But this must be done appropriately and professionally with the intention to ensure safe quality care.

Avoid fatigue. It's more likely that a build-up of a number of factors will lead to dangerous fatigue rather than a single late night. The main factors affecting fatigue as a young doctor are:

- total hours worked in a week – 49 is typical for interns but anything approaching 60 or over presents significant risks
- having at least a full day off during the week – two is preferable
- whether you are rostered on for night shift and if you have your main sleep during the day – three night shifts per week can place you at a greater risk
- number of days you are on call per week.

Maintain a work life balance

Keep up your friendships – remember an appropriate work life balance is vital. If you see a colleague struggling remember you are 'duty bound' to assist – it could be you next.

Join a medical defence organisation (eg MIPS)

Your employer will most likely provide indemnity for medical negligence, but not for complaints to the Medical Board, Drugs & Poisons investigations and possibly not for Coronial inquests. Join a medical defence organisation to ensure you are sufficiently covered. These organisations typically offer a support line and professional development.

MIPS provide a MIPS' 24 hour Medico-Legal Support and risk education (workshops, webinars and online modules) to members at no additional cost.

Resources

- medicalboard.gov.au Codes, guidelines and policies
 - ama.com.au Membership and benefits
 - humanrights.gov.au Workplace Bullying, Violence and Harassment fact sheet
 - beyondblue.org.au Doctors' Mental Health Program
 - pmcv.com.au Bad Behaviour Project
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