



CAREERS

Career progression as a doctor in the Royal Navy

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Doctors in the Royal Navy have many opportunities to build a varied and lasting career while developing additional leadership skills. This makes them highly sought after if they decide to return to civilian life.

After spending three years as a general duties medical officer—using your skills either on shore, onboard a ship, on a submarine, or working with the Royal Marines—you can choose to specialise just as you would in civilian medicine.

Specialty training

The Royal Navy Medical Service provides comprehensive healthcare to ships, submarines, and Royal Marine personnel at sea and on land. It also provides primary care and deployed surgical support, and its floating hospital, RFA *Argus*, acts as the primary casualty receiving facility.

As part of your training, you can also get involved in areas such as radiation protection, diving medicine, and environmental medicine through the Institute of Naval Medicine.

Entry to specialty training is managed in consultation with a career manager who will balance personal ambitions and preferences with the Royal Navy's need for particular specialties.

There are posts available in a wide range of specialties, including general practice, emergency medicine, anaesthetics, and surgery. Some fields, however, such as geriatrics and paediatrics, are not included for obvious reasons.

Training in the NHS

Specialty training is carried out within the NHS, usually (but not always) at one of the Ministry of Defence's hospital units and at medical centres in navy bases. Specialty training for navy doctors follows the same routes for both primary and secondary care as for civilian doctors.

Royal Navy doctors within an NHS setting, rather than at naval bases, work alongside their NHS colleagues. They are fully integrated and not limited to treating navy patients and their

dependants. The only difference is that navy doctors wear their uniforms on duty.

Applying for other roles

As part of their training, navy doctors can apply for overseas fellowships—these might include working at US trauma centres or with the flying doctors in Australia.

There are plenty of opportunities for promotion. To help progress doctors' careers in the service, the Royal Navy says that it provides a great deal of feedback, encouragement, and additional training. As a medical officer, you may enter the Royal Navy at a more senior rank than other officers, depending on your experience.

As a doctor you will be promoted to lieutenant and then lieutenant commander automatically, as long as you pass your professional training and perform to the necessary level. After that, doctors are selected on merit for promotion to commander (a rank second only to captain in the Royal Navy) and beyond.

Additional qualifications

During your professional training and throughout your career, you will be given the opportunity to gain qualifications accredited by academic institutions and professional organisations. All are recognised internationally.

These qualifications, plus the experience and leadership skills you will have acquired, will enhance your career prospects if you decide to leave the service. While navy doctors can apply for a medium commission of 18 years or a full commission until the age of 58, if you decide you want to leave the service for civilian life, then you will need to give six months' notice.

For those who take on a part time role as a Royal Navy reservist, you will gain new medical skills with direct benefit to your role in the NHS, including battlefield advanced trauma life support and underwater medicine. You can also take part in formal management training on reserve staff and command courses.