



# CAREERS

## How to become a doctor in the Royal Navy

Helen Jones *freelance journalist*

London, UK

As a doctor in the Royal Navy you will provide clinical care for some of the 35 000 men and women currently serving.

You will be expected to work in a range of challenging conditions at sea, on land, in the air, or beneath the waves in a submarine. You may be required to work in hostile situations and will be away from home for months at a time.

You will need to demonstrate outstanding leadership skills and have the ability to work as part of a tight knit team in difficult circumstances. But a career as a doctor in the navy provides adventure and overseas travel, and you will get to do things that few medical professionals experience in their jobs in the NHS.

### Entry requirements

As well as having medical qualifications, you will need to pass a series of specific tests for the Royal Navy. These include an entry medical and a pre-joining fitness test.

You don't have to be an outstanding athlete, but if you are a man aged between 24 and 29, for example, you must be able to run 2.4 km on a treadmill in at least 12 minutes and 42 seconds. That is the minimum standard, but selection boards want candidates to do better. If you want to earn the coveted green beret of a Royal Marines Commando, however, then the fitness test is more stringent.

You will also have to pass the Admiralty Interview Board—one and a half days of tests and interviews that include scenario planning, leadership exercises, and psychometric assessments.

### Induction

Once accepted, you will begin your career with a seven week induction course at Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth. This is followed by a six month new entry medical officer course which includes specialist training, such as battlefield advanced

trauma life support and a course on dealing with nuclear and chemical warfare casualties.

To serve with the Royal Marines you will also need to complete the all arms commando course. This includes infantry skills and amphibious, vertical assault, and helicopter training, as well as commando tests and a gruelling final exercise. This exercise involves a series of endurance tests such as a 30 mile march in full gear across Dartmoor.

### Submarine Service

If you want to join the Submarine Service as a doctor, you are required to have passed the same tests as a submariner. These include escape training and a series of aptitude tests to ensure you are psychologically suited to life in a confined space.

You will also carry out further medical training in radiation medicine and atmosphere control and spend four months at HMS Raleigh. Here you will learn all aspects of submarine operation (in an emergency situation, you will be called upon to carry out other people's jobs), warfare, weapons, and nuclear propulsion. After training you will go to sea for the first time and earn your "dolphins"—the badge of a submariner—and qualify for a £5000 (€6018; \$6520) bonus.

### Royal Naval Reserve

If you are tempted by the lifestyle, but don't want to become a full time serving officer, you can apply to join the Royal Naval Reserve as a doctor. The role involves using your medical skills to support Royal Navy operations all over the world, including humanitarian aid missions.

In recent years, reservists have served everywhere from Afghanistan to Antarctica and it's an opportunity to put your existing skills to use and acquire new ones.