



The BMJ

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2021;373:n1298
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n1298>
Published: 20 May 2021

Covid-19: Senior hospital doctors have been left with moral injury, BMA warns

Abi Rimmer

The covid-19 pandemic has left some hospital consultants suffering from moral injuries after they were forced to act against their moral compass, the chair of the BMA's Consultants Committee has warned.

Speaking at the BMA's annual consultants conference held online on 19 May, Rob Harwood said that consultants had faced the pandemic head on, working long hours, sometimes without correct or adequate personal protective equipment, and had seen their patients and colleagues die in unprecedented numbers.

He said that the psychological impact of being unable to do what they believed was right had been too much for some doctors, who had been left with moral injury as a result. He also renewed calls for a pay uplift for consultants of at least 5%, as part of the BMA's Fairness for the Frontline campaign.¹

"We have been called heroes and received applause, but lofty rhetoric and claps can't capture the reality of our situation," said Harwood. "After all the clapping from the Cabinet, the government's proposal of a 1% pay rise was disappointing, mean spirited, and insulting—although not surprising."

Earlier this month Sarah Hallett, chair of the BMA's Junior Doctors Committee, called on the government, the NHS, and education bodies to provide better support for trainee doctors to deal with the psychological effects of the pandemic.¹

Days later Richard Vautrey, chair of the BMA's UK General Practitioners Committee, warned that the pandemic had left many GPs physically exhausted and mentally drained.²

¹ Rimmer A. Covid-19: BMA demands better psychological support for trainees. *BMJ* 2021;373:n1199. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n1199. pmid: 33975856

² Iacobucci G. Covid-19: "Exhausted" GPs need more support for future crises, says leader. *BMJ* 2021;373:n1206. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n1206. pmid: 33975911

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