

Call Duration

The call frequency articles in the resident physician collective agreement were established to help ensure the health and well-being of resident physicians particularly in relation to fatigue. In a presentation to the Saskatchewan Medical Association (SMA), Dr. Dianne Maier of the Physician and Family Support Program of the Alberta Medical Association highlighted the mass of studies likening sleep deprivation to inebriation; fatigue has been linked to decreased mental acuity and mistakes.

Dr. Maier lists the following as warning signs of fatigue:

- Falling asleep during conferences and rounds
- Restlessness and irritability with those around you
- Checking your work repeatedly
- Difficulty focusing on the care of your patients
- Feeling like you just don't care
- Inflexible thinking

To suggest ways to combat the risks of fatigue, Dr. Maier provided recommendations from the Australian Medical Association:

- Minimize occasions with more than 10-hour shifts
- Ensure a minimum of 8 hours of sleep between shifts
- Have a regular day (24 hours) free of work in every 7-day period
- Ensure a longer break between/following night shifts
- Take short breaks at work
- A period of extended hours needs to be compensated with a longer break before starting work again.

In line with these recommendations, make sure you are aware of the call frequency expectation established in your collective agreement. Article 14.04 (a) states "In-house call is on a one-in-four (1:4) basis. The number of days on service is specific to any individual Resident, and reflects the number of working days subtracting any time the Resident is away on vacation (inclusive of the weekend prior to or following scheduled vacation as per 12.07), Education leaves, Sick and Special leave, and Maternity/Parental leave as follows:

01-06 days on service - 1 call
07-10 days on service - 2 calls
11-14 days on service - 3 calls
15-18 days on service - 4 calls

19-22 days on service - 5 calls
23-26 days on service - 6 calls
27-30 days on service - 7 calls
31 days on service - 8 calls"

Article 14.05 (b) states "Home call is on a one-in-three (1:3) basis. The number of days on service is specific to any individual Resident, and reflects the number of working days subtracting any time the Resident is away on vacation (inclusive of the weekend prior to or following scheduled vacation as per 12.07), Education leave, Sick and Special leave, and Maternity/Parental leave, as follows:

01-05 days on service - 1 call
06-08 days on service - 2 calls
09-11 days on service - 3 calls
12-14 days on service - 4 calls
15-17 days on service - 5 calls

18-20 days on service - 6 calls
21-23 days on service - 7 calls
24-26 days on service - 8 calls
27-29 days on service - 9 calls
30-32 days on service - 10 calls

As per the Combined Call Letter of Understanding in the Collective Agreement, any combination of in-house and home call service will reflect a proportional frequency ratio as follows (the following list assumes no vacation/leaves):

- 1 in-house call: A resident can perform 8 home calls
- 2 in-house call: A resident can perform 6 home calls
- 3 in-house call: A resident can perform 5 home calls
- 4 in-house call: A resident can perform 4 home calls
- 5 in-house call: A resident can perform 2 home calls
- 6 in-house call: A resident can perform 1 home call
- 7 switched call: A resident can perform 0 home call