



Supporting our Doctors in Training

The last few weeks have been particularly difficult for our Doctors in Training. Despite this they have continued to work hard for us and our patients day in, day out.

At times like this when the psychological demands on them are high, we as Consultants and GPs need to support them. At times like these our Doctors will look to us for this support.

Research shows that people are able to deal with increasing demands on them if they have the support of their peers. **However this effect is most pronounced when they have the support of those who supervise them.**

As Consultants and GPs, we will often **set the 'tone'** or culture in our departments and GP practices. Like it or not, our actions and behaviours will be viewed by our Doctors through the prism of whether they see us as supportive or not.

Therefore at this difficult time, please take a few moments to focus on how you can really support your Doctors, to demonstrate to them that their welfare is important to you. Practical steps you could take include:

1. Making sure your doctors get their **rest breaks** when they are working
2. Make sure they are able to **come in on time and leave on time** rather than having to come in early or leave late to get jobs done
3. And make sure for any **expected or unexpected rota gaps**, that all necessary steps are taken to fill these using other members of the team

I know many of you do all of the above day in, day out. However, do not underestimate the power of your leadership as Consultants and GPs at this difficult time. Making a concerted effort to take these practical steps now, will send a clear & powerful signal to your doctors that you support them.

Taking back control

People often cope better with increasing demands on their time if they have some ownership, control and decision making ability over their own destiny.

This is best described in Karasek's Demand-Control-Support theory published in 1979¹. In his seminal paper, working patterns characterized by high demands, low control (which he described as decision latitude), and low support led to decreases in health and well-being.

In order to wrest some control back over their own destinies, a **Doctors in Training forum will soon be established**. This will be established by trainee representatives of the Local Negotiating Committee (LNC) at St George's with my support as the Guardian of Safe Working and Jonathan Round as the Director of Medical Education.

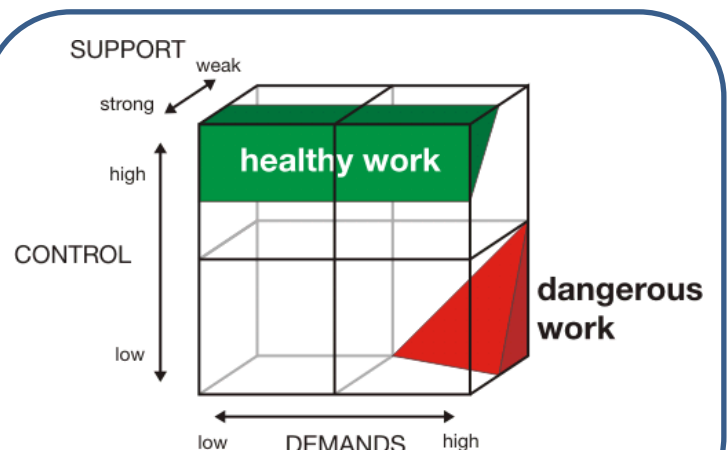
We hope this will become a powerful forum for doctors in training of all grades and disciplines and will for the first time, give our doctors a true voice.

¹Karasek, RA Jr. Job Demands, Job Decision Latitude, and Mental Strain: Implications for Job Redesign. *Adm Sci Q* 1979;**24**:285-308.

Your Guardian

This regular monthly update goes out to all GP trainers across South London and Consultants employed by St George's. **A copy will also be sent to GP trainees across South London and Specialty trainees employed by St George's.**

My next update will be in October. However if you have any questions about the **Doctors in Training forum, the Demand-Control-Support model or practical issues in providing support to your doctors** please let me know at sunil.dasan@nhs.net



A pictorial representation of Karasek's Demand-Control-Support Model (1979)