

Prolonged Sick Leave

Guidance Document for Trainees

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Note
This booklet was prepared to assist doctors in training who require a prolonged absence from work due to illness. Although we aim to accurately describe leave entitlements and as many available resources as possible, changes to government policy on duration of leave entitlements etc. may be announced in the future and hence may differ from those outlined below. Therefore, all entitlements should be checked directly with your employer, and any updates to policies or entitlements will supersede those as stated within this document. The health and wellbeing officer can be contacted to check availability of up-to-date resources.

Section 1: Introduction

The Physician Health and Wellbeing Committee is a group of RCPI trainees who are committed to improving the training conditions and wellbeing of NCHDs. The Health & Wellbeing Committee is a subcommittee of the Trainee Committee within the RCPI, which is the voice of trainees within the college.

This document aims to provide information to doctors who are undergoing postgraduate RCPI medical training and have been diagnosed with a serious illness. A recent survey distributed by our group, which received over 400 responses, demonstrated that despite a significant number of trainees being diagnosed with a significant illness during training, over half were not referred to occupational health at this time (unpublished data) (appendix 1). The majority of trainees described a lack of awareness regarding sick leave entitlements and pay structure during a period of illness. Unfortunately, stigma persists regarding illness and illness-related absences among doctors in training, with over 70% of respondents agreeing that they “would be worried what consultants would think if they knew I required support from the health and wellbeing department” and almost 40% agreeing with the statement “I worry that taking sick leave of greater than 2 weeks duration would affect my career progression.”

We recognise that receiving a significant medical diagnosis can be overwhelming and that a number of complex issues arise in relation to this topic. Our goal is to support NCHDs during a difficult time by providing clear, compassionate and up-to-date information that will allow you to know your rights regarding taking a leave of absence and returning to work. We also want to ensure that you have all the information required to access the supports and funding that you are entitled to. Finally, we aim to tackle stigma surrounding illness amongst NCHDs.

- Who this applies to:**
- **All RCPI trainees**, including interns, senior house officers (SHOs), specialist registrars (SpRs), and other NCHDs in structured training programmes.
 - **Visiting trainees** from abroad who are working in Irish hospitals under RCPI supervision.

This document is intended for NCHDs who have been diagnosed with an illness which necessitates a prolonged absence from work. It may also be useful for trainers, consultants, or colleagues supporting a trainee in this situation.

We understand that this may be a stressful time. Please note the checklist at the end of this document for a concise list of things to consider when diagnosed with a significant illness during training.

Section 2: Initial Steps Following Diagnosis

Learning that you have a significant diagnosis can be distressing, and you may be unsure of what to do next. Here are the key steps to take to ensure you receive the support you need:

1. Prioritise Your Health

- Follow your treating doctor's advice and attend all necessary medical appointments.
- If hospitalised, inform your clinical supervisor as soon as this is feasible.

2. Notify Your Clinical Supervisor/Consultant

- Have a conversation with your supervisor about your diagnosis of a serious illness and expected absence.
- You do not have to discuss any details. You may provide a medical certificate without disclosing specifics and this is completely your choice.
- Your employer is entitled to know that you are out of work for medical reasons, but they are not entitled to know any of the medical details of your illness. In practice, many people will disclose their specific condition to their employer as they have a good working relationship, and it can often help plan specifics for accommodations upon return. However, this is entirely a personal decision, and accommodations can be advised by occupational health who will make medical recommendations on the basis of your condition without disclosing the nature of the condition.

3. Contact Occupational Health

- Every HSE hospital has an Occupational Health Service that can:
 - Advise on workplace accommodations.
 - Advise on sick leave entitlements.
 - Certify sick leave.
 - Assist in planning a phased return to work when you recover.
- You can be referred to Occupational Health by your manager or self-refer yourself.
 - *Self-Referrals: If you self-refer, occupational health will provide you with advice but are not able to write to your employer. In general, this route of referral is not preferred in these circumstances.*
 - *Manager Referral: Medical manpower, or your line manager (consultant) can refer you to Occupational Health. Referral forms are available on the HSE website (and for voluntary hospitals should be available through the Occupational Health Department or HR).*
- A National NCHD Occupational Health Hub exists and is more suitable for trainees with complex or prolonged health conditions which are likely to stretch over the course of multiple jobs / training sites.
 - *Self-Referrals: Trainees can self-refer to the NCHD Hub, however, as outlined above, this is only for confidential advice and no report will be issued.*

- *Manager Referrals: Trainees can be referred by their line manager, HR / Medical Manpower, or their NSD / Program Director.*
- *Regional Occupational Health Referral: Local Occupational Health Departments can refer trainees to the national service if required*
- *Link: NCHD Hub*

4. Submit Medical Certification to HR

- Sick leave must be certified by a doctor.
 - *These must include: the date of issue, the date of expected return to work and the doctor's signature*
- Submit this to your hospital's HR department to ensure you receive paid leave.
- Some sites will require you to directly claim illness benefit from the social welfare department, while other sites will claim this on your behalf and pay this directly to you. Ensure to check this with your local site so that you are not inadvertently negatively affected financially as a result.
- The frequency required of sick notes can vary dependent on sites. In certain circumstances, such as when there is a significant illness requiring prolonged medical treatment or rehabilitation for months, a sick note of up to six months may be accepted. In a case such as this, the note may be required to advise that the person is under medical supervision and undergoing treatment over the coming months such to a point where it is not reasonably expected that they will return to work until a certain date. It is important to check with your local site regarding this in order to comply with local policies on managing attendance.

Section 3: Supportive conversations and confidentiality

We understand that discussing a serious illness can be difficult. You have the right to privacy, and you should only share what you feel comfortable disclosing.

Who you can talk to

- Your supervisor/consultant: They can help adjust your workload if you plan on staying in work and can help with arranging a phased return to work.
- Occupational Health: Provides confidential medical advice and workplace support. The purpose of Occupational Health is to provide independent medical advice to management on your condition and ability for work. Any information disclosed during your consultation is kept with the same medical confidentiality as any other medical appointment. Occupational health **will not without explicit consent** disclose the nature of your medical condition and will provide advice and workplace supports which will help to support your return to work, without disclosing your private medical information.
- RCPI Health and Wellbeing Department: Offers guidance on training adjustments, entitlements and other relevant resources.
- Trusted colleagues: Many NCHDs find it helpful to speak with peers who may have had similar experiences.

Confidentiality Protections

- Your medical information is protected under GDPR and Medical Council guidelines.
- HR and supervisors only need to know your fitness for work—not your diagnosis.

Section 4: Sick Leave: Entitlements and Processes

HSE Sick Leave Scheme for NCHDs

As a public servant, you are covered under the Public Service Sick Leave Scheme as follows:

Short-term absences:

Fully Paid Uncertified Sick Leave

- Up to 7 days in a rolling 24-month period (self-certification). This means you do not have to submit a medical certificate if your sickness absence is not more than 2 consecutive days (unless you are specifically requested to do so).

Long-term absences:

Ordinary sick leave within the HSE is paid as follows:

The maximum paid sick leave is 183 days in a rolling 4-year period. Sick pay at full, half, and Temporary Rehabilitation Remuneration (TRR) rates count towards this.

If you do not exceed the 183-day threshold, you are entitled to:

- 92 calendar days (3 months) on full pay in a rolling 1-year period
- 91 calendar days (3 months) on half pay in a rolling 1-year period (this applies when you reach the full-pay threshold)

Critical Illness Protocol (CIP)

If an employee becomes seriously injured or critically ill, and has supporting medical evidence, they may be granted extended paid sick leave by their employer under the terms of the Critical Illness Protocol (CIP) as follows:

- Up to a maximum of 6 months (183 days) on full pay in a rolling 1-year period, followed by
- Up to a maximum of 6 months (182 days) on half pay
- Subject to a maximum of 1 year (365 days) in a rolling 4-year period.

The CIP works on an annual basis with the limit being 365 days. In the case of chronic conditions, where the CIP is awarded for a full 365 days and is continued to be required, then the situation would need to be assessed again to see if the condition(s) that led to the granting of the CIP are still valid. A further Occupational Health referral would be required at this stage.

The medical criteria for receiving Critical Illness pay are:

The nature of this medical condition has at least one of the following characteristics:

- Acute life-threatening physical illness
- Chronic progressive illness, with well-established potential to reduce life expectancy
- Major physical trauma ordinarily requiring corrective acute operative surgical treatment
- In-patient or day hospital care of ten consecutive days or greater¹

Footnote 1. In the case of pregnancy-related or assisted pregnancy-related illness, the requirement for hospitalisation of ten consecutive days will be reduced to two or more consecutive days of in-patient hospital / clinic care.

These criteria are assessed by the Occupational Health Physician in your hospital.

As part of this application, you will need to submit supporting medical information **directly to Occupational Health** from your treating doctor, which outlines your medical diagnosis, treatment (e.g. in the case of requiring acute surgery for a major trauma), and/or which outlines and confirms the dates of your inpatient/day-hospital care.

It is important to note that the final decision regarding the granting of CIP rests with management. Additionally, CIP may be granted at the discretion of management in cases where the strict medical criteria are not met, e.g. some medical conditions which require a significant absence may not meet the defined CIP medical criteria.

Accrued annual leave and bank holidays

- While on sick leave, you continue to accrue annual leave and leave for bank holidays.
- This amounts to 17 days during each 6-month period (12 days annual leave and 5 bank holidays).
- This leave is often used to support a phased return to work. So for example, you can use accrued annual leave for 3 days a week for several weeks upon your return.
- This can be paid out if you leave the post.

Temporary Rehabilitation Renumeration (TRR)

If you have used up your entitlement to sick leave at full and half pay, you may be eligible for a payment called TRR. Hospital management have the discretion to approve or refuse TRR on a case-by-case basis.

Before TRR can be paid:

1. You must have 2 years' service. If you have more than 1 period of employment in the public service, this requirement can be met by combining these employment periods. This applies as long as there is not a break in service of 26 weeks or more.
2. There must be a reasonable prospect that you will return to work. Your manager should consider medical advice from occupational health when making their decision.

TRR is paid at 37.5% of your salary. It is calculated using your basic salary, pensionable allowances and unsocial hours payments you earn.

More information about TRR is available at: <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/leave/sick-leave/>

Parent's Leave (If Applicable)

This is nine weeks of paid leave that must be taken before your child's second birthday (increased from seven to nine weeks in August 2024). It is available to both parents. You can claim Parent's benefit during this time, and this must be applied for through the Department of Social Protection (this can be done online via www.mywelfare.ie). Employers have the option to top this up however for most NCHDs this is not topped up by your employer. It must be taken in blocks of at least a week i.e. you can't take it as single days. This can be taken post CIP and all annual leave and bank holiday entitlements. Check with your medical manpower department to ensure there are no specific local rules regarding this.

Parental Leave (if applicable)

Parental leave entitles you to 26 weeks of unpaid leave per child, up to the child's 16th birthday. This is applied for by submitting the parental leave form (form available at: <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-and-services/hr-forms/>), as well as the child's birth certificate. When you are taking the leave, you must input it into NiSRP (HR and Payroll Self-Service) [This may differ depending on your training site-check with local Human Resources]. This is leave you are entitled to, so if you apply for it and it is rejected, they usually have to agree to it if you apply again. You can take this leave in blocks, or days, or even hours at a time. Some people use it to shorten their working week or day which may be of particular benefit when returning from a serious illness. For those on training schemes you will need to fill out a leave of absence form for your training scheme, and the end date of your training will be pushed out accordingly.

Process to avail of sick leave entitlements:

When diagnosed with a medical condition, the first seven days of sick leave will be covered without certification. As soon as is feasible, arrange to meet the Occupational Health team who will assess whether you meet the criteria for the Critical Illness Protocol. If you meet these criteria, the Occupational Health team will provide you with certification which you can then forward to your HR department who will arrange your pay. Please note in some clinical sites, payroll is not run by the Human Resource or Medical Manpower department, so make sure you confirm who you should be talking to about payroll.

You will also require certification of sick leave. This can be from your G.P. or your specialist. You will need to send this to H.R. or the relevant department that looks after payroll.

Often, at the time of initial diagnosis, you may be too sick to arrange these things. It is OK if there is a delay in arranging the paperwork / certification of your illness. The HR department in your hospital will be able to back-date your period of illness.

Section 5:

Financial Considerations and Additional Supports Government Supports

Drug payment scheme

Anyone living in Ireland and intending to live in Ireland for at least one year can apply to the Drug Payment Scheme (DPS) for a DPS card. This is not means tested. This is relevant if you pay more than €80 per month for approved drugs, medicines and appliances as it caps the amount you pay at €80. Note that this only applies to approved drugs, medicines and appliances. You can apply online via the following link: <https://www2.hse.ie/services/schemes-allowances/drugs-payment-scheme/card/>

Medical card

The medical card scheme applies to people living in Ireland and intending to live in Ireland for at least one year. It is means-tested (although there are exceptions) and if you have a spouse or partner, the HSE looks at your combined finances. A medical card covers GP visits, certain dental services, certain drugs, medicines and appliances, certain hearing services and eye care. For more information about a medical card, please see: <https://www2.hse.ie/services/schemes-allowances/medical-cards/>

Medical Council Annual Retention Fee

The Irish Medical Council (IMC) offers a 50% refund on annual retention fees for individuals who have had long-term absences from work due to illness, subject to approval. Contact the IMC directly to see if you can avail of this option.

Insurance

If you have income protection, contact your provider to be aware of your entitlements.

If you have mortgage protection, health insurance or life insurance, it is also worth contacting your providers to see if they have any benefits you can avail of during this time. You may have income protection which you were not aware of, for example built in to your mortgage protection insurance. Your health insurance may provide more than you realise, for example mental health support or physiotherapy sessions.

Mortgage

If required, you may contact your mortgage provider to see if they would consider a break from your mortgage for a period of time (e.g. one year) during a serious illness. This would require a letter from your doctor and is at the discretion of your mortgage provider.

Contract duration

If you are on a temporary NCHD contract, talk to HR about how your contract will be handled if it expires during your illness.

Section 6:

During an Absence

Self-care

Be kind to yourself during your absence. Prioritise your health and follow the treatment plan from your healthcare team. Try to keep in mind the importance of sleep, exercise and maintaining a healthy diet as much as possible.

Consider the importance of your mental health during what can be a stressful time.

See our resource list in Section 8 of this document for useful resources.

Contact

It can be helpful to stay engaged with social aspects of work and to keep up your work relationships. This can aid your mental health and your ultimate return to work. How much contact you would like with anyone in work is a highly personal decision. This can be decided in conversation with the Health and Wellbeing Manager in RCPI who can also keep you updated on touch points within the RCPI and within your training programme during your leave.

Work-based activities

There is no onus or expectation on trainees to engage in work-based activities while they are on sick leave. However, work is often a significant part of a medic's life, not only in terms of the work itself, but also the social connections that come through work and training schemes. Everyone will have different circumstances, however for many Trainees, it may be useful to continue to engage in some work-based activities. This is dependent on the Trainee being mentally and physically able to do so, and completely the Trainee's decision, but may help with skills retention, mental health, and avoiding becoming isolated from colleagues. Options include attending educational departmental activities such as multi-disciplinary meetings, journal club and grand rounds. This may be a more suitable option if any of these are offered online. Trainees are encouraged to continue to attend National Specialty Study days (e.g. BST or HST days) when possible. There may be online courses which could aid your training and education which you can avail of during your leave of absence.

It is important that if you decide to engage in work-based activities, you do so at your own pace, are doing so because you want to and not because you feel you have to, are aware of your own limits, and ensure that you continue to focus on your health and wellbeing as a priority.

Funding

You can still avail of the NCHD Training Support Scheme (TSS), the Higher Specialist Training Fund, and the Clinical Course and Exam Refund Scheme during your leave of absence. Please find the links for more information about each of these schemes in the Useful Links section of this document.

Section 7: Returning to Work

We refer the reader to the RCPI document entitled “Returning to Training After a Long Absence Policy” for detailed information about returning to work <https://www.rcpi.ie/Learn-and-Develop/Trainee-Wellbeing/Policies>. This section will include a brief overview.

It is important to acknowledge that time out of practice has an impact on clinical skills. Skills have been shown to decline over periods ranging from 6 to 18 months, according to a curve, with a steeper decline at the outset and a more gradual decline as time passes. The amount of time between learning and losing a skill varies between skills and between individuals, with many mitigating factors. Each Trainee’s needs upon returning to training will be different and any plan to facilitate the safe return to training will reflect those needs.

Important steps:

7.1. Arrange to see Occupational Health

It is important to arrange to see a doctor in the Occupational Health Department when you are getting close to being able to return to work. They will be able to help you to manage this, provide support regarding available options and they will also need to certify you as fit for work again if you have had a period of extended leave.

Some examples of supports which may be offered include:

- A phased return to work e.g. returning to your full-time hours over a period of 4-6 weeks
 - 50% hours for 2-3 weeks
 - 75% hours for 2-3 weeks
 - Full working week thereafter
- Temporary restriction in certain activities, e.g. no on-call shifts, not carrying an emergency bleep (e.g. arrest or stroke bleep), not engaging in procedures which require the use of heavy leads, etc.

These recommendations will be individualised and tailored towards your specific medical condition and needs. Additionally, they will need to be implementable by local management who have discretion regarding this and should liaise with occupational health directly if there is an operational challenge with any recommendations suggested.

Recommendations made by occupational health are ultimately subject to operational feasibility and at the discretion of management. It is for the employer to determine what is a ‘reasonable’ accommodation.

7.2 Discuss your return with the Health and Wellbeing Manager

Arrange a meeting to discuss your return to work with the Health and Wellbeing Manager approximately 8-12 weeks prior to your planned return. This allows enough time for your return to be organised, for example to assign you to a training post (if this has changed since your leave), for your rota co-ordination. The Health and Wellbeing Manager will discuss your return to training needs and will consider reasonable accommodation with the NCHD Hub,

National Specialty Director or equivalent. An ‘Initial Return Meeting’ Form will be filled out. The Health and Wellbeing Manager will liaise with your trainer on your behalf. In some instances, for example if the trainee would not have changed department during their illness, it may be more appropriate to liaise directly with your trainer, and this is up to the trainee’s discretion. Reasonable accommodations may be made for your return to work. These can be discussed with the Health and Wellbeing Manager and/or your clinical trainer and/or the NSD for your specialty.

7.3 Discuss your return with your Consultant Supervisor

Trainees should meet with their Trainer / Consultant Supervisor to discuss their return to work. They should discuss the fact the Trainee has been out of work for an extended period, identify any concerns the trainee themselves might have about their return, the Trainee’s needs, goals and expectations. The Trainee and Trainer should explore how best to support a safe return to practice. **It is strongly recommended that the Trainee does not participate in on-call for a period of at least one month depending on the circumstances following a return to training after an extended absence.** Enhanced supervision and regular reviews are in place to provide a supportive structure and to ensure that the return to training is safe, smooth and responsible.

Protective year after critical illness

When you return to work after a critical illness or injury you have a protective year. This means you can use your remaining CIP leave for subsequent non-critical illnesses within 1 year of returning to work. This is subject to an overall limit of 365 days critical illness leave in a rolling four-year period.

Less than full time working on return to work

Trainees may return to training on a phased-return basis (as described in section 7.1), on a flexible training scheme, in a supernumerary post, or in a normal full-time post. Arrange a meeting with the Health and Wellbeing Manager RCPI, who can advise on all opportunities available to you.

Section 8: Resources and Supports

General Practitioner

Multiple surveys, including our own, have reported on the significant amount of NCHDs who are not registered with a GP. It is particularly important to be registered with a GP now that you have a serious illness. The Irish College of GPs have a programme for all NCHDs to ensure they get access to a GP. NCHDs should email info@icgp.ie with their IMC number, RCPI number and location and ICGP will organise a local GP for you.

Occupational Health Department

All NCHDs have access to Occupational Health Services and you will have interacted with the Occupational Health Department when being certified for illness leave. The Occupational Health Department's role encompasses the broader remit of work and work environment (including psychosocial environment), health and ill-health as well as life and lifestyle. The team can be a source of support for you during your absence and can provide useful advice regarding your return to work.

HSE Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a national initiative that offers free, confidential counselling services to hospital staff experiencing psychological stress. The EAP gives you access to trained, experienced counsellors in a confidential environment. Self-referrals are accepted. For more information: <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-and-services/employee-assistance-programme-staff-counselling/>

List of Psychologists for Doctors

The RCPI provides a list of Psychologists who provide counselling for doctors. This list is organised by county so that you can search for a psychologist locally with ease. Find the list at: <https://www.rcpi.ie/Learn-and-Develop/Trainee-Wellbeing/External-Resources>

Practitioner Health Matters Programme

The Practitioner Health Matters Programme operates on a not-for-profit basis and is funded primarily by voluntary contributions and professional associations. It has replaced the former Sick Doctor Scheme. It offers confidential help from experts to doctors who have a concern regarding mental health or substance misuse. Further information: www.practitionerhealth.ie

NCHD Hub

The NCHD Hub provides a workplace health and wellbeing service for any NCHD who has a contract with the HSE or a section 38 service. The NCHD hub provides psychological support, advice for work-place adjustment for psychological and medical issues, disability and work advice and fitness for work assessments. Advice is confidential and available via self-referral using a form available at: <https://www.rcpi.ie/Learn-and-Develop/Trainee-Wellbeing/External-Resources>

Health and Wellbeing Department

The Health and Wellbeing Department are there to help and support you throughout your illness. Contact the department at any stage during your absence for help and advice. Email: wellbeing@rcpi.ie

RCPI Mentoring Service

This is a confidential mentoring service that operates on a self-referral basis, at no cost to trainees. The mentors involved in the service are consultants who have received specialised training on how to mentor. To avail of this service, email wellbeing@rcpi.ie

Coaching

Coaching is a free confidential service available to staff working in the HSE and Section 38 agencies. The service is provided by professional coaches who have completed an accredited coach training programme. <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/training-and-development/coaching/>

RCPI Trainee Wellbeing External Resources

The RCPI website offers links to many useful external resources on its website in the Trainee Wellbeing section (<https://www.rcpi.ie/Learn-and-Develop/Trainee-Wellbeing/External-Resources>).

These include links with practical advice as well as online tools related to mindfulness, sleep, diet and more.

Section 9:
For Consultants Supporting a Trainee
Diagnosed with a Serious Illness

As a supervising consultant, your role is crucial in supporting the trainee during a vulnerable time. This involves:

- Creating a safe, supportive and confidential space for communication with the Trainee throughout their diagnosis and absence from work.
- Encouraging the Trainee to link in with Occupational Health and HR as soon as possible. Supporting the Trainee in applying for appropriate leave.
- Staying in occasional contact with the Trainee (if appropriate) so that they do not feel isolated from the workplace.
- Helping with planning the Trainee’s return, with a flexible and open approach regarding expectations of the Trainee upon their return.

It is important to be aware of this document and of the ‘Returning to Training After a Long Absence Policy.’ Please provide Trainees with links to both documents.

Supportive leadership can have a lasting impact on a Trainee’s wellbeing and recovery.

Section 10:
Useful links and Forms

Further information and HSE HR forms are available here: <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/leave/sick-leave/>

Please note that the following links or contact details may expire or be moved following the time of writing this document. Double check the form you are using is the correct one and refer to the main HSE sick leave webpage (above) if a link is not working.

Resource	Links and Forms
HR and Occupational Health	
Public Service Sick Leave Scheme	https://nsso.gov.ie/en/services/sick-leave-in-the-civil-service/#article-section-public-service-sick-leave-scheme Changes to the scheme came into effect on 4 September 2023. The revised scheme is set out in: https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/hr-circulars/hr-circular-024-2023-changes-to-the-public-service-sick-leave-scheme.html
Relevant HR Policies and Procedures	http://www2.healthservice.hse.ie/organisation/national-pppgs/managing-attendance-policy-and-procedures/ https://www2.healthservice.hse.ie/organisation/national-pppgs/hse-rehabilitation-of-employees-with-illness-or-injury/
Self-Certified Sick Leave	https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/hr-circulars/appendix-1-hse-hr-circular-024-2023.doc
Temporary Rehabilitation Remuneration (TRR)	https://healthservice.hse.ie/documents/764/HR114_Temporary_Rehabilitation_Form_v2.pdf https://healthservice.hse.ie/documents/3350/HR_118_temporary_rehabilitation_remuneration_TRR_top-Up_payment_application.pdf
Critical Illness Protocol (CIP)	https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/hr-circulars/hr-circular-014-2018-re-changes-to-critical-illness-protocol.html
National HR Employee Helpdesk	Phone: 1800 444 925 Email: ask.hr@hse.ie The helpdesk is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 12 noon
Occupational Health	Information for staff and managers about management referrals is available on the Occupational Health webpage. https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-and-services/occupational-health/
RCPI Resources	
RCPI Psychologists for Doctors	https://www.rcpi.ie/Learn-and-Develop/Trainee-Wellbeing/External-Resources
Practitioner Health Matters Programme	www.practitionerhealth.ie
NCHD Hub	https://www.rcpi.ie/Learn-and-Develop/Trainee-Wellbeing/External-Resources
Health and Wellbeing Department	mailto:wellbeing@rcpi.ie
RCPI Mentoring Service	mailto:wellbeing@rcpi.ie
Additional RCPI Trainee Wellbeing External Resources	https://www.rcpi.ie/Learn-and-Develop/Trainee-Wellbeing/External-Resources

Resource	Links and Forms
HSE Resources	
Employee Assistance Programme (EAP):	Freephone: 0818 327 327 Website: https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-and-services/employee-assistance-programme-staff-counselling/
Coaching	https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/training-and-development/coaching/
Stress Management	As well as accessing support via the EAP, staff can find information on managing stress at https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/health-and-safety/work-related-stress/ . This includes information about work-related stress and the stress risk assessment process, which staff can discuss with their manager. Where there may be interpersonal difficulty between the employee and the manager the 'HSE Management of Concerns Relating to Work-Related Stress Flowchart' page 29, advises about an alternative manager completing the risk assessment.
Ergonomic Assessments	If you feel an assessment of your workstation/chair may help in your return to work, an ergonomic assessment can be conducted by the health and safety department. Health & Safety risk assessments. https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/health-and-safety/risk-assessment/ or Phone 1800 420 420

Section 11: Checklist

1. Notify your clinical supervisor / consultant
 - Ask your consultant to refer you to the Occupational Health Department
2. Arrange a meeting with your Occupational Health Physician
3. Submit sick-certification to HR department
 - Check whether illness benefit is managed by your payroll or whether you need to apply for this separately from the Welfare Office (institution dependent)
4. When you feel ready, consider contacting the Health and Wellbeing Manager in RCPI who will help with many aspects of your leave, including touching base with you at agreed intervals, keeping you up-to-date with ongoing training days / opportunities, sharing resources with you and making you aware of your entitlements.
5. Financial considerations: Consider whether applying for a medical card or the drug payment scheme would be beneficial. Consider discussing a mortgage break with your provider if relevant. Contact your health insurance and income protection providers (if relevant) to see what benefits are available to you.
6. Returning to work:
 - Contact the Health and Wellbeing Manager approximately 8 weeks in advance to discuss your return to work and any reasonable accommodations that may need to be made.
 - Arrange a meeting with your Occupational Health Physician.
 - Discuss with your consultant / clinical supervisor.

Throughout the process, consider the importance of self-care: Engage fully with your treatment plan; aim to rest adequately; exercise if appropriate and try to enjoy healthy nutrition.

Appendices

Appendix 1:

What Happens When Doctors Get Sick? A National Survey to Determine Understanding of Sick Leave Entitlements Amongst RCPI Trainees - Survey Overview

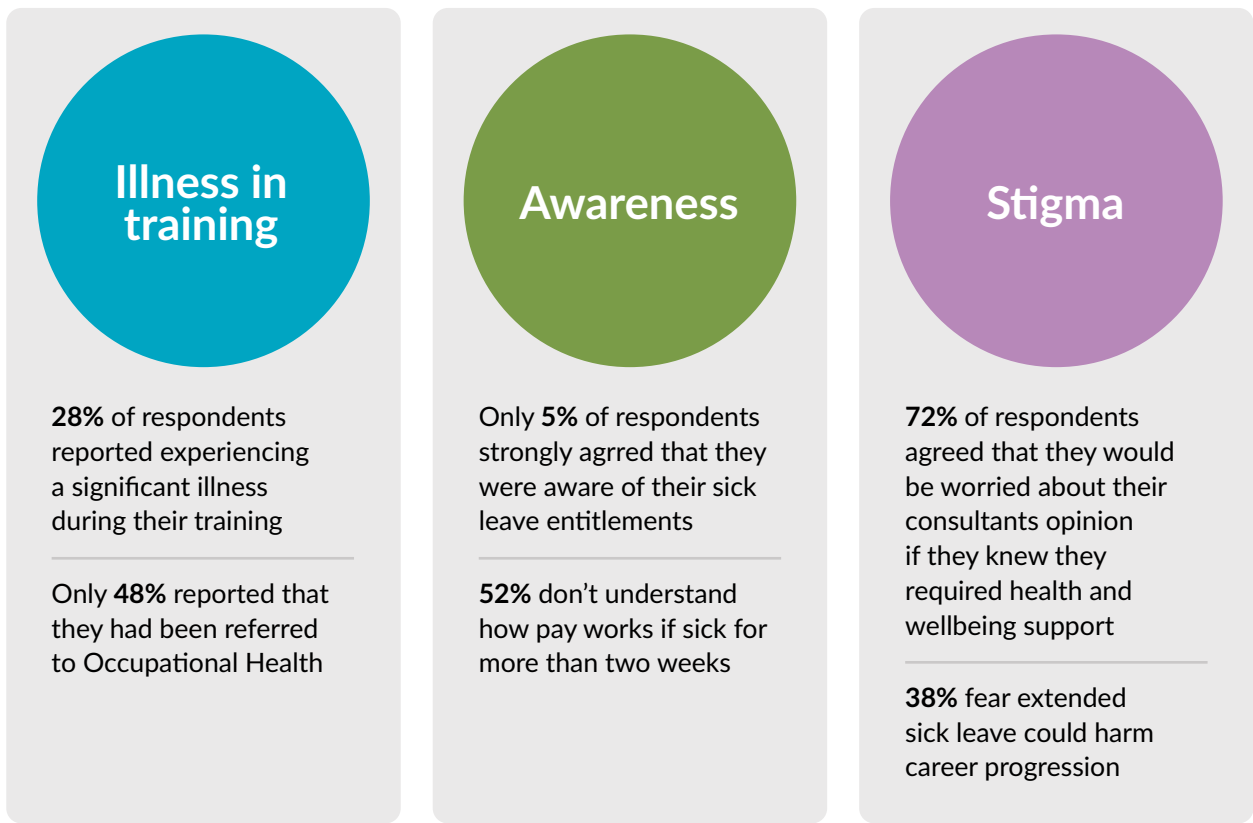
A Broderick¹, S Duignan¹, P Carr¹, M Golden¹

¹ Health and Wellbeing Committee, Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) (unpublished data at the time of writing this document)

Research was conducted by the RCPI Health and Wellbeing Committee in 2025 to determine the understanding of sick leave entitlements amongst RCPI trainees as well as their attitudes towards taking prolonged sick leave. This research acted as the basis for this guidance document.





An anonymous online survey was distributed to all RCPI trainees across seven faculties. Data was collected over a 2-week period with a reminder email being sent one week after the initial mailing. A total of 436 responses were received.

Key outcomes:





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