

Duty hours

“Duty hours” refer to the specific periods during which an individual is expected to perform their assigned tasks or responsibilities as part of their job. Duty hours can vary widely depending on the industry, type of work, and employment arrangements.

Here are some key points related to duty hours:

Full-Time and Part-Time Employment:

Full-time employees typically work a standard number of hours per week, which is commonly around 40 hours. Part-time employees work fewer hours per week.

Standard Workday:

A standard workday often consists of eight hours, commonly referred to as a 9-to-5 schedule. However, actual work hours can vary, and some industries or professions may have longer or shorter standard workdays.

Overtime:

Overtime refers to hours worked beyond the standard workday or workweek. Overtime hours are often compensated at a higher rate, as regulated by labor laws.

Flexible Work Arrangements:

Some organizations offer flexible work arrangements, allowing employees to choose or modify their duty hours within certain parameters. This may include flextime, compressed workweeks, or remote work options.

Shift Work:

Industries that operate around the clock, such as healthcare, manufacturing, and emergency services, often involve employees working in shifts. Shift work can include day shifts, evening shifts, night shifts, and rotating shifts.

On-Call Duty:

In certain professions, individuals may be required to be on-call, meaning they must be available to work if needed during specific hours, even if they are not actively working.

Duty Hour Regulations:

Some industries and professions, particularly those in healthcare and transportation, have specific regulations governing duty hours to ensure the safety and well-being of workers and those they serve. These regulations may include limits on consecutive hours worked, mandatory rest periods, and maximum weekly hours.

Breaks and Rest Periods:

Labor laws often mandate the provision of breaks and rest periods during duty hours. This ensures that employees have time for meals, rest, and relaxation.

Work-Life Balance:

Achieving a healthy work-life balance is a key consideration in determining duty hours. Balancing work commitments with personal and family life is essential for the overall well-being of employees.

Remote Work and Telecommuting:

With advancements in technology, remote work or telecommuting has become more common. In such arrangements, employees may have flexibility in determining their duty hours as long as they meet job requirements.

Contractual Agreements:

Employment contracts often outline the expected duty hours, whether the position is full-time or part-time, and any specific terms related to work hours. Both employers and employees need to have clear communication and understanding regarding duty hours, as well as to comply with relevant labor laws and regulations. Creating a work environment that supports a healthy balance between work and personal life contributes to employee satisfaction and overall productivity.

Neurosurgery residency involves a complex structure with multiple hospitals, services, and clinic days, leading to challenges in creating equitable on-call schedules. Manually prepared scheduling systems are prone to biases, error, and perceived unfairness. To address these issues, they developed an automated scheduling system (Automated Optimization of Neurosurgery Scheduling System [AONSS]) to reduce biases, accommodate resident requests, and optimize call variation, ultimately enhancing the educational experience by promoting diverse junior-senior-attending relationships.

AONSS was developed and tailored to the University of Florida program, with inaugural use in 2021-2022 and mandatory implementation in the 2022-2023 academic year. 2019-2021 academic years were used as control. Residents were surveyed using Google Forms before and after implementation to assess its impact. Outcome measures included call and pairing variations, duty hours, as well as subjective factors such as satisfaction, fairness, and perceived biases.

Twenty-six residents (28%-39% female/year) were included in the study. AONSS was used for 6/13 blocks during the 2021-2022 academic year and 13/13 blocks for the 2022-2023 academic year. Overall call variation was reduced by 70%. All other objective secondary measures have improved with AONSS. Weekly and monthly duty hours were reduced and less varied. Satisfaction scores improved from 21% reporting being somewhat satisfied or very satisfied to 90%. Fairness scores improved from 43% reporting being somewhat fair or very fair to 95%. Perception of gender bias decreased from 29% to 0%. No resident felt there was racial bias in either system.

The newly developed automated scheduling system effectively reduces variation among calls in a complex neurosurgery residency, which, in return, was found to increase residents' satisfaction with their schedule, improve their perception of fairness with the schedule, and completely remove the perception of sexual bias in a program that has a large percentage of females. In addition, it was found to be associated with decreased duty hours ¹⁾

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Porche K, Mohan A, Dow J, Melnick K, Laurent D, Hoh B, Murad G. Automated and Optimized Neurosurgery Scheduling System Improves Resident Satisfaction. Neurosurgery. 2024 Jan 8. doi: 10.1227/neu.0000000000002821. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 38189465.

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