

ReviewWWs

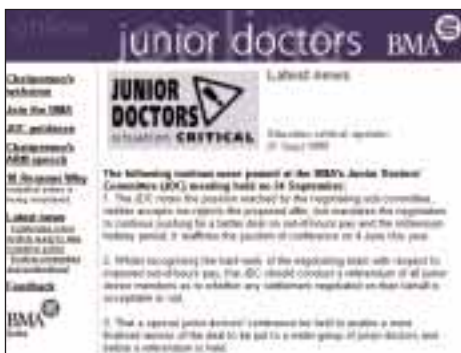
CyberDoc reviews the Internet on healthcare strikes

(The blue web-style underlines indicate hyperlinks on CyberDoc's website)

With much publicity having been given recently to the possibility of junior doctors striking, *Triple Helix* reviews what the Web has to say on the subject of health professionals taking industrial action.



The BMA [junior doctors](#) site is not surprisingly one of the most useful on this subject on the Internet. The only criticism is that it seems to focus too much on doctor readers and could be more welcoming to non-medical readers. The site has a prominent link from the main BMA pages and it leaves you in no doubt of the serious intent of the BMA. The reasons why doctors are considering striking are clearly described and you are left with a feeling that although this is a last resort for all doctors, it is being considered as the only way to reduce doctors' hours and improve patient care. The site promises to be a useful source of information as the dispute progresses.



According to BMA negotiators, the government is not taking them seriously. Judging from the Department of Health webpage this is the case. There is no mention of doctors at all, let alone information about their working conditions or the current dispute.

As is increasingly the case, my next port of call was the [BBC site](#) which is usually a good source of information. In an example of the fluidity of the Internet, previous coverage sympathetic to doctors'



long periods of overtime and rates of pay was no longer easily accessible. One of their background briefings called [NHS pay 99](#) focused on total pay, and seemed to ignore the hours issue. Elsewhere there are stories about doctors' strikes in [South Africa](#) and [Lebanon](#). There is also a suggestion that [Welsh doctors](#) may benefit from a separately negotiated agreement.

There is a brief mention of the possibility of [other health staff](#) also striking. The [UNISON](#) website mentions this, but it is

not given anything like the same prominence as the BMA site gives its dispute.



There is a perception among UK doctors that conditions in Australia and New Zealand are much better than in the UK. This is attributed, perhaps correctly, to strikes that have occurred in both countries. An article in the *Australian Medical Journal* outlines the [unhealthy tradition](#) of long doctors' hours and seems to indicate that the problem is not completely resolved there.

UK junior doctors might argue they have benefited from strike action in other nations. Maybe in the next few months UK strike action will help to establish internationally the principle that doctors should not work excessive overtime as the cheapest form of labour in the hospital.

CyberDoc is Adrian Warnock, an SHO in psychiatry on the Royal London Hospital rotation. Links can be found at <http://xtn.org/cyberdoc/strikes/>