



Mental Health Ireland

HSE Mental Health Services

WHAT ARE THEY DOING?... PSYCHIATRY TRAINEE ON-CALL DUTY: DATA FROM AN ACUTE TERTIARY HOSPITAL IN DUBLIN



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte Health Service Executive

USMAN U¹, KEENAN K¹, MORAN A².

¹Department of Liaison Psychiatry, CHI at Temple Street University Hospital, Dublin 1. ²Associate of the Dean Clinic, St Patrick's Mental Health Service, Dublin 8, Ireland.

AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS

To prospectively evaluate rest opportunity, break availability, end-of-shift timings and perceived workload appropriateness among psychiatry trainees during on-call duty in an acute adult tertiary hospital in Ireland. We hypothesize that the acute clinical demands are voluminous, but rich training opportunity may be impacted by limited rest periods and secondary perceived negative experience amongst psychiatry trainees in Ireland.

BACKGROUND

Arduous clinical demands, fatigue, and limited recovery following on-call shifts are established risk factors which may impact clinician wellbeing and patient safety. Irish psychiatry trainees frequently report high workload demands in the on-call period, and cite burnout, despite the European Working Time Directive (EWTD) (93/104/EC) being Nationally legislated for in Ireland in 1998. The College of Psychiatry, Ireland has recently proposed recommendations to improve on-call experiences. (College of Psychiatrists of Ireland, 2025). Robust support systems and duty-hour regulations are suggested to reduce fatigue and support trainee wellbeing (NCHD Taskforce, 2024). Acute hospitals often struggle to staff psychiatry on-call rotas, despite offering loaded reimbursement. Real-world data on psychiatry trainee on-call experience is limited (Bumpstead et al., 2025).

METHODS

A mixed-methods survey was conducted for a three month period of July- September 2022 in a 407 bed Tertiary Hospital inclusive of a 47 bed acute adult psychiatry ward and an Emergency Department serving an ethnically diverse population of approximately 330,000. Following each rostered twenty-four hour on-call shift, psychiatry trainees were invited to complete a structured survey capturing rest periods, meal breaks, shift end-time versus that scheduled, inter-agency calls (e.g., other hospitals, police, child-protection services), and perceived appropriateness of workload for their training level. Descriptive statistics were applied.

RESULTS

Response rate was 68.8% (N=62). Adequate rest occurred in 52.63% with a meal break in 78.95%. Only 61.40% of shifts ended on schedule; 5.26% of trainees were asked to work post-call despite EWTD. Inter-agency calls occurred in 17.24% of shifts. Overall, 96.49% reported workload was appropriate for training level. Perceived inadequate rest was commonly associated with higher referral volumes and safety-event reviews.

CONCLUSION

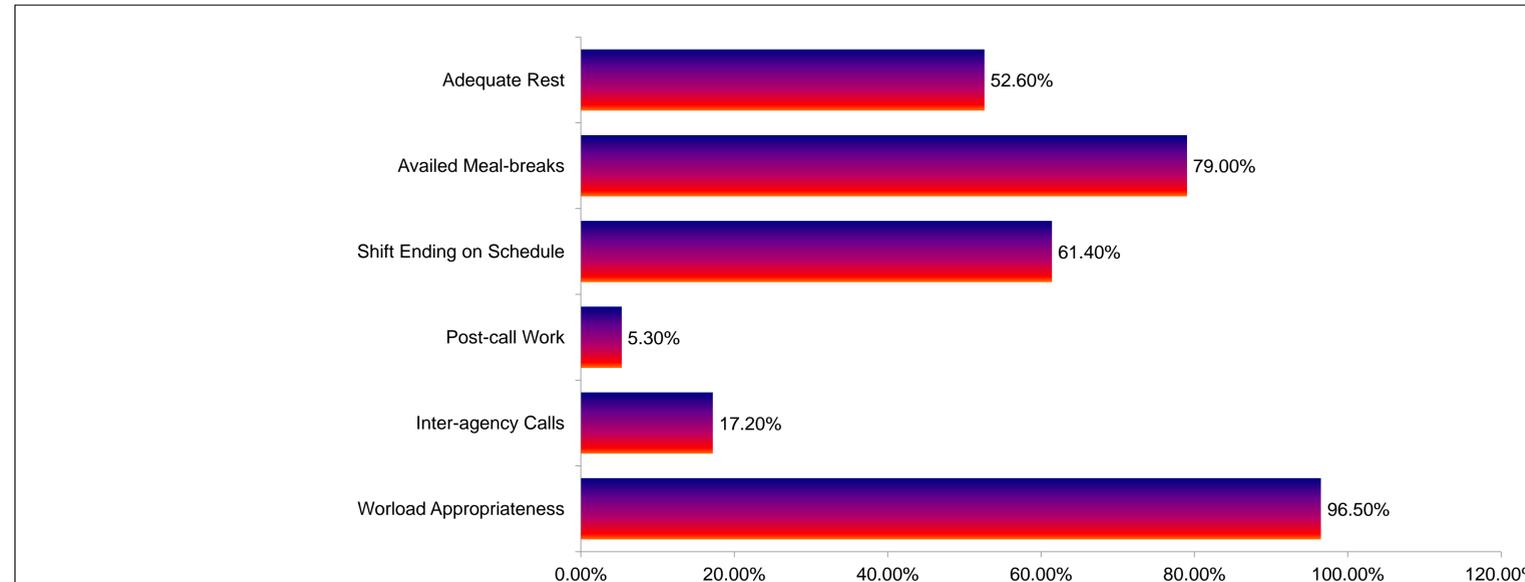
Trainees frequently reported limited rest, missed breaks and delayed shift completion during on-call duty. These findings highlight the importance of protected rest policies, clear post-call protocols and sustainable out-of hours rota planning both for service provision and trainee sustainability in Irish psychiatric training environments.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None to declare.

REFERENCES

1. Council of the European Union Council Directive 93/104/EC of 23 November 1993 concerning certain aspects of the organization of working time. Off. J. 1993, L 307, 0018–0024.
2. College of Psychiatrists of Ireland. (2025). Improving the on-call training experience for psychiatry trainees: Position paper. <https://irishpsychiatry.ie/portfolio/improving-the-on-call-training-experience-for-psychiatry-trainees/>
3. National Taskforce on the Non-Consultant Hospital Doctor (NCHD) Workforce: Final Recommendations Report. (2024) Department of Health, Ireland
4. Bumpstead, et al. (2025) 'How should we manage fatigue in on-call workers? A review of guidance materials and a systematic review of the evidence-base', Sleep Medicine Reviews, 79, article 102012. doi: 10.1016/j.smrv.2024.102012.



SUMMARY OF SHIFT CONDITIONS AND TRAINING EXPERIENCE (N=62)