



## Inexperienced Resident Doctors to Receive More Supervision in Malpractice Prevention Effort

*Posted On: July 7, 2010 by [Patrick A. Malone](#)*

A newly minted M.D. doctor wandering the halls of a hospital, working long hours with little sleep as he or she begins years of residency training, can be a potential disaster waiting to happen. That's the source of the old bromide about July being the most dangerous month to get sick, since that's when residency programs start their new year.

In theory, all junior doctors receive careful supervision from senior doctors in training and from full-fledged "attending" physicians. But in practice, in busy institutions junior doctors can work long hours with little supervision, and mistakes that cause injuries to patients can result.

Patrick A. Malone  
Patrick Malone & Associates, P.C.  
1331 H Street N.W.  
Suite 902  
Washington, DC 20005

[pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com](mailto:pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com)  
[www.patrickmalonelaw.com](http://www.patrickmalonelaw.com)  
202-742-1500  
202-742-1515 (fax)

In 2003, residency programs accredited by the official supervisory body, the ACGME, were required to cut resident work weeks from 120 to 80 hours. But in December 2008, the Institute of Medicine, part of the National Academies of Sciences, recommended more changes to improve patient safety in residency programs.

One of them was to end the practice of 24-hour shifts.

The ACGME is now following that advice, but only in part. As of July 2011, first-year residents will be limited to 16-hour shifts, but after the first year, residents will still be able to work a 24-hour shift. Many experts believe the longer shifts are dangerous for patient safety because of sleep deprivation.

The 16-hour limit for first-years is part of a series of recommendations being submitted to the ACGME board for final approval in a few months.

Sidney Wolfe, MD., head of Public Citizen Health Research Group, is critical of the failure of the ACGME to propose a 16-hour limit across the board. He says: "The improvements in the new ACGME guidelines are largely swamped by the failure to cover the majority of medical residents with the protection of not having to work more than 16 hours continuously."

In the new proposal, first-year residents would also be barred from moonlighting at other jobs and from being "on call" in hospitals.

See the [article](#) in American Medical News for more details.

*People interested in learning more about our firm's legal services, including [medical malpractice in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia](#), may ask questions or send us information about a particular case by phone or email. There is no charge for contacting us regarding your inquiry. A [malpractice attorney](#) will respond within 24 hours.*

*All contents copyrighted 2010 [Patrick Malone & Associates](#) except where copyright held by others. Reproduction in any form prohibited except where expressly granted.*

Patrick A. Malone  
Patrick Malone & Associates, P.C.  
1331 H Street N.W.  
Suite 902  
Washington, DC 20005

[pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com](mailto:pmalone@patrickmalonelaw.com)  
[www.patrickmalonelaw.com](http://www.patrickmalonelaw.com)  
202-742-1500  
202-742-1515 (fax)