

UK Hospitals Confront Doctors' Strike



London, April 27 (RHC)-- British hospitals are taking "military level" contingency plans as thousands of junior doctors in the UK have walked off their jobs over a contract dispute, marking the first all-out strike in the history of the National Health Service (NHS).

The two-day strike began on Tuesday upon a call by the British Medical Association (BMA), and affects almost all medical services, including accident and emergency, intensive care and maternity, all of which are disrupted for the first time over a long-running contract dispute.

The British government has proposed a contract which extends NHS services to seven days a week while reducing the pay for working on the weekend. The last round of negotiations between the government and the BMA collapsed in January, prompting the government to announce that the contracts would be imposed in summer.

According to NHS England, "military level" contingency planning had been carried out to make sure urgent and emergency care remains unharmed. More than 125,000 operations and appointments have so far been canceled "to free up staff" during the walk-out.

Patients are being advised to think carefully about using the NHS during the strike and even a website has been set up to provide patients with details about available services where they live.

A recent BBC survey found that the majority of Britons side with the striking doctors despite the halt in all medical services.

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