



PRESS RELEASE

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University of Washington leaders place personal schedules over patient safety

Seattle, WA, October 24, 2017 – The University of Washington Graduate Medical Education (GME) and Labor Relations (LR) are now requiring physicians representing the University of Washington Housestaff Association (UWHA) to meet with them during the day, despite multiple notifications that such daytime meetings will lead to more patient handoffs and therefore increased risk of medical errors.

The UW GME/LR have a contractual obligation to regularly meet with the UWHA. Historically, meetings between these groups have occurred in the evening, usually starting after 5:30pm. This is common practice for similar medical institutions nationally in order to minimize impact on patient care. UW GME and LR have recently notified UWHA that these meetings must now be held between the hours of 9am-5pm, during the hours that UWHA leaders are actively caring for patients.

"Of course we would also prefer to keep our evenings free from union obligations. Many of us work 60-80 hrs each week in the hospital, including many nights and weekends. When we are done at work, we want to be home with our families. However, we are willing to sacrifice our personal time in order to avoid compromising the care of our patients. It is frustrating that UW administrators are not willing to do the same" (Dr. Trevor Gessel, UWHA President)

The Assistant Director of LR, Banks Evans, has confirmed to UWHA that the reason for this change is because they do not want these meetings to encroach on their personal time. UWHA has responded by detailing how daytime meetings will lead to cancellation of clinic sessions and increased need for patient handoffs—temporarily transferring the care of a patient from one doctor to another—which has been proven to increase medical errors and harm patients. The director of GME, Dr. Byron Joyner, appeared indifferent to the patient safety concerns, writing "I hope that you will continue to compromise with UW Labor Relations..."

UWHA and GME/LR do not currently have any meetings scheduled to discuss important issues affecting UWHA members.

About The University of Washington Housestaff Association (UWHA)

The UWHA was founded in 2014 and is a member-operated labor organization comprised of over 1300 licensed medical and dental trainees at the University of Washington and associated training programs. The mission of the UWHA is to advocate for its members in matters of employment, professional development, and personal development during their training. For more information please visit uwresidents.com.

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