

## WVU GME Policy on Alertness Management and Fatigue Mitigation

### I. Purpose

West Virginia University Graduate Medical Education (WVU GME) is committed to promoting patient safety, resident/fellow well-being, and high-quality clinical education. This policy establishes expectations and procedures for **alertness management and fatigue mitigation** to ensure that residents and fellows can provide safe, effective patient care while maintaining their own health and wellness. (I.A.4.)

### II. Policy Statement

WVU GME recognizes that fatigue negatively affects clinical performance, learning, professionalism, and patient safety. All residents, fellows, faculty, and program leadership share responsibility for managing fatigue and supporting a culture in which alertness and wellness are prioritized. Residents and fellows must be able to **recognize fatigue, use mitigation strategies, and remove themselves from patient care when fatigued to the point of impairment** without fear of retaliation. (I.A.4.)

### III. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All residents and fellows in WVU GME Sponsored Programs
- Faculty supervising residents and fellows
- Program Directors, Associate Program Directors, and Chief Residents/Fellows
- GME leadership and institutional officials

### IV. Definitions

- **Fatigue:** A state of physical or mental weariness that reduces alertness, performance, and decision-making ability.
- **Alertness Management:** Strategies and systems designed to promote adequate rest and reduce fatigue-related impairment.
- **Fatigue Mitigation:** Actions taken to reduce the risk of fatigue-related errors, including rest periods, naps, schedule adjustments, and relief from duties.
- **Impairment:** Reduced ability to safely perform clinical responsibilities due to fatigue, illness, or other factors.

### V. Responsibilities

#### A. Residents and Fellows

Residents and fellows are expected to:

- Arrive to duty adequately rested and fit for duty
- Recognize signs and symptoms of fatigue and impairment
- Use approved fatigue mitigation strategies (e.g., strategic napping, calling for assistance)

- Notify supervising faculty or program leadership when fatigue may compromise patient safety
- Remove themselves from clinical duties when impaired due to fatigue
- Accurately report duty hours and comply with ACGME duty hour standards

## **B. Faculty and Supervisors**

Faculty members must:

- Model healthy behaviors related to fatigue management
- Monitor residents and fellows for signs of fatigue-related impairment
- Provide appropriate supervision and relief from duty when fatigue is identified
- Support residents who request assistance or relief due to fatigue

## **C. Program Directors**

Program Directors are responsible for:

- Ensuring schedules comply with ACGME duty hour requirements
- Educating residents and fellows on fatigue recognition and mitigation
- Providing access to safe transportation
- Developing program-specific fatigue mitigation strategies
- Reviewing fatigue-related concerns, reports, and events

## **D. WVU GME Office**

The WVU GME Office will:

- Oversee institutional compliance with ACGME requirements
- Provide educational resources related to alertness and fatigue mitigation (III.B.5.a).(3)
- Monitor institutional trends related to duty hours and fatigue (III.B.5.a).(1)
- Support programs in implementing corrective actions when needed (III.B.5.a).(2)
- Provide call rooms and rest areas (III.B.7.d).(2)

## **VI. Education and Training**

All residents and fellows will receive education on the following topics (III.B.5.a).(3):

- The physiology and effects of sleep deprivation
- Recognizing fatigue and impairment
- Fatigue mitigation strategies
- Institutional expectations for reporting fatigue-related concerns

Residents and fellows will receive education through the following modalities:

- AMA modules: “Sleep Deprivation and Effects on Patient Care” and “Sleep Deprivation: Fatigue Management Strategies”

- New resident/fellow orientation
- SOLE resources
- Program level didactics

## **VII. Fatigue Mitigation Strategies**

WVU GME supports the following strategies (III.B.5.a).(2):

- Strategic napping during extended shifts when feasible
- Access to call rooms and rest areas (III.B.7.d).(2)
- Adequate time off between scheduled duty periods
- Backup coverage or redistribution of workload when fatigue is identified
- Safe transportation options for residents too fatigued to drive (III.B.7.d).(3)
  - Residents may call the main WVU Security line (304-598-4444) or ask the House Supervisor to call, to request safe and reliable transport home from work in the rare case that extreme fatigue prevents safer transportation home.

Residents will not be penalized for appropriately using fatigue mitigation strategies.

## **VIII. Reporting Fatigue and Safety Concerns**

Residents and fellows are encouraged to report:

- Fatigue-related impairment
- Unsafe working conditions related to fatigue
- Duty hour violations

Reports may be made to:

- Supervising faculty
- Program leadership
- The WVU GME Office
- Through institutional safety or reporting systems which can be anonymous (i.e. Origami or the GME Button)

Reports may be made without fear of retaliation.

## **IX. Patient Safety**

If a resident or fellow believes their fatigue poses a risk to patient safety:

1. They must notify their supervising physician immediately
2. Care will be transferred to an appropriately rested provider
3. Program leadership will review the situation to prevent recurrence

## **X. Non-Retaliation**

WVU GME strictly prohibits retaliation against any resident or fellow who:

- Reports fatigue or impairment
- Requests relief from duty due to fatigue
- Reports duty hour violations or patient safety concerns

Concerns about retaliation should be reported to the Program Director or GME Office.

## **XI. Compliance and Review**

Failure to comply with this policy may be addressed through:

- Program-level review and remediation
- Institutional oversight
- Corrective action plans

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with ACGME requirements and institutional standards.

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