

Afternoon ward rounds: time for it to be abolished?

Editor – Carpenter *et al*'s article demonstrates that worryingly afternoon consultant ward rounds in medical specialties in acute hospitals are not as uncommon as we would like to think.¹ The article highlights the negative perception junior doctors have of the effects of afternoon ward rounds on team efficiency, patient flow and job satisfaction in hospital medicine.

Moreover, this practice also has the potential to impair effective and timely patient management by delaying senior review of new patients and disrupt the patient's afternoon rest period. Morning consultant ward rounds would facilitate effective multidisciplinary board rounds in keeping with the principles of the SAFER patient flow bundle that recommends a senior review before midday to make management and discharge decisions.² To achieve this, nurse presence on the consultant ward rounds is crucial to facilitate information sharing to optimise clinical management and discharge planning.

Though the study by Carpenter *et al* does not indicate why some consultants preferred afternoon ward rounds, it is likely that this was because their mornings were taken up either in providing outpatient services or in performing procedures. It is imperative that all medical specialties review their working practices to facilitate morning ward rounds, but lack of space in the afternoons to provide other services could be a limiting factor.

In our opinion, afternoon consultant ward rounds in acute hospital medical wards should be abolished. The afternoons can then be effectively utilised to complete the clinical tasks, including discharge letters for patients planned for next day discharge, review new patients who may have arrived after the morning rounds and to discuss with patients and relatives their diagnoses, management plans, progress and discharge planning. The same principles should also apply to other non-medical specialties (eg surgical) and for other non-acute inpatient facilities, namely community hospitals.

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References

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2. NHS Improvement. *SAFER patient flow bundle*. NHS, 2017. <https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/safer-patient-flow-bundle-implementation> [Accessed 04 July 2019].