



Doctor Comments – How Fatigue Affects their Work

An SDQ survey of 113 Queensland public hospital doctors asked them to describe examples of how fatigue affected their work:

“I have prescribed wrong dose of morphine (10x what was actually needed and this was given to patient). Luckily patient was already ventilated!”

“When stitching wounds late at night I often have to pull the stitch out several times before it is satisfactory. This causes excessive healing times and scarring. It never happens to me when I am fresh.”

“I put a chest drain in on the wrong side after 30 hours of work.”

“I had a microsleeep while assisting in a hand case and fell off my stool; had a microsleeep driving home after operating for 24hrs and ran off the road (no injuries, fortunately).”

“Errors in prescribing drugs e.g. wrong dose or charting penicillin to allergic patient. Errors in operating theatre due to poor concentration due to tiredness/fatigue. Have almost fallen asleep at the wheel whilst driving home from work on more than one occasion.”

“In physical tasks eg about to drill a hole for a screw and zoning out looking at the tip of the drill (the nurses timed me at 6min; I thought it was a few seconds); getting the yips when trying to start an incision; being unable to focus using an operating microscope as kept going cross-eyed.”

“Wrote up iron transfusion for 10 times the required amount, realised just before asking nurses to give it.”

“I feel unsafe driving home some days - but there are no facilities at the hospital where I can sleep.”

Contact Salaried Doctors Queensland for further information.