



Leaflet 8

When disability-related/chronic conditions develop or significantly deteriorate

When a doctor receives a diagnosis, their minds are often accelerated by their knowledge. This may mean that they make incorrect assumptions and do not seek to clarify these.

It is useful to have a pre-determined process to follow when receiving such news. This helps to ensure that reactions are logical, helpful and proactive rather than reactionary, random and potentially detrimental.

Immediate actions:

- New diagnosis received/pre-existing condition progression or deterioration confirmed
- See your own GP:
Arrange to take some time off studies/work by speaking to your own GP. Use this opportunity to discuss how you are coping with the news received, and also to ask any questions
- Inform your human resources department/practice manager/other line manager of your leave via the normal sick leave reporting procedure
- Spend some time with your support network:
Speak to family and/or friends. Either visit them if you need your own space or go stay with them if that would help.
- Seek support and advice from a support group:
A list of groups can be found at www.disableddoctorsnetwork.com/link-to-medical-advice-support-grou
- Arrange a meeting with work:
This is to discuss your diagnosis, the potential implications for the future and your current needs. It is likely that a referral to an occupational health department will need to be made at this time
- Occupational health appointment:
With adequate and appropriate preparation, this can produce a report that can be used to help communicate and obtain what it is that you now need from your workplace in order to remain as well as possible whilst also reaching your maximum professional potential
Please see Factsheet 6: The importance of occupational health
A useful resource on preparing for an occupational health (OH) assessment that can be found at www.disableddoctorsnetwork.com/occupational-health

Next steps:

In order to implement adjustments, you need to arrange a discussion with your supervisor/line manager/Human Resource department.

With appropriate support and workplace adjustments, many people are able to continue in their current role.

However, it may be that your career progression needs to be reconsidered. Your speciality choice may need to be revised; your training route may need to be re-envisioned. There are some diagnoses and conditions which may mean continuing in the profession may no longer be possible or advisable. The next steps will be different, depending upon your individual situation and circumstances.

If you feel that you cannot continue in your current role or specialty, then you will need to escalate discussions to your seniors. Who these are will depend upon your grade. For specific advice, see our Factsheet 9.

If you are unable to continue working in any role, despite reasonable adjustments, then there are a number of discussions you should ensure have taken place. Please refer to Factsheet 9 for full details of these.

If, after all of these conversations, it is apparent that you are not able to remain in work, then you may need to get in touch with NHS Pensions to discuss an assessment for ill-health retirement.

Longer-term actions:

Inform your Responsible Officer (RO) of events as soon as you are able to. If you remain in clinical practice, it is possible for your appraisal to be delayed to account for time taken off sick.

It is important to recognise that receiving a new diagnosis, developing a new impairment, the subsequent loss of function and loss a degree of independence provokes a reaction similar to the grieving process.

In time, you may find it helpful to explore therapy to help you in coming to terms with and accepting these losses and your new life which emerges from them.

This leaflet is a summary of our more extensive Factsheet 5. For more in-depth information on the following topics, please refer to this document which can be found on the NHS Practitioner Health and the Disabled Doctors Network websites

-  How to cope
-  Immediate actions to take including a link to an A to Z guide of support groups for multiple conditions
-  Next steps
-  Longer-term actions
-  Ill-health retirement
-  Where to go for help and advice
-  Specific advice for older doctors

www.practitionerhealth.nhs.uk

www.disableddoctorsnetwork.com