

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The **National Health Service (NHS)** was established in 1948 to provide free (state-funded) **medical care** and services to the citizens of the UK. The aim of the NHS was to promote the nation's health and to reduce inequalities in health and in access to health care. Free **medicine** was part of the "Welfare State", which gave free education to the young, money to the unemployed, and pensions to the old. Sick people do not have to pay to see the doctor, or to stay in hospital, and they only pay part of the cost of their medicines. Every British citizen who is employed should pay a weekly contribution to the national **insurance**.

There are two sorts of doctors in the UK – **hospital doctors** and **general practitioners (GPs)**, also known as **family doctors**. Health Service doctors are paid by the Government, the pay depending on the number of patients they have served every month. Family doctors provide **primary medical care** in the UK. GPs may also undertake work outside the NHS and may provide **private services** receiving the pay directly from the patients.

Most medical treatment in the UK is free but charges are made for **drugs, spectacles** and **dental care**. Free **emergency medical treatment** is given to any visitor from abroad who falls ill while staying in the country. But those who come to England for treatment must pay for it.

The NHS was reorganized several times. The reforms were aimed at the patients' interests and needs and the provision of a comprehensive system of health care. As a member state of the World Health Organization the UK is committed to the view that each individual has the right to the highest level of health. This requires an effective balance between prevention, cure and care, investment in technologically-based diagnosis and treatment, the development of long-term supportive care for the elderly and chronic sick.

There is a lot of evidence that prevention and care have a big impact on the improvement of the population's duration and quality of life. Therefore, prevention

should remain the most important means of controlling morbidity and mortality. Care is also one of the main priorities as the age structure of the population changes and the number of the elderly increases.

People may use the NHS or go to doctors as private patients. The private medical sector in the UK is relatively small. In big towns there are some private hospitals called “**nursing homes**”. Many people who have enough money prefer to be private patients.

UK POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL TRAINING

UK postgraduate medical training is divided into three phases.

1. **Internship immediately after graduating** - a one-year period in the House Officer position rotating in therapy and surgery.
2. **Basic Specialist Training** - a minimum of two years in the Senior House Officer (SHO) position. A large number of SHO posts provide training programs according to the needs of the specialty.
3. **Higher specialist training** - a minimum of four years in the Specialist Registrar position. Entry to basic and higher specialist training is by a competitive process. Doctors must apply for posts as they are advertised. It is not possible to have a guaranteed move from basic to higher specialist training.

Key questions for critical thinking

1. Do you consider the Britain’s National Health Service to be ideal? What are its evident advantages and disadvantages?
2. Compare the structure and duration of postgraduate medical training in the UK and Belarus. Which is more adequate to your mind?

3. CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

❶ Choose the appropriate variants.

1. Medical services in the UK are
 - a) state-funded
 - b) private
 - c) county-financed
2. The pay depends on

- a) the number of patients per hour
 - b) the number of patients per day
 - c) the number of patients per month
3. Primary medical care is provided by
- a) interns b) general practitioners c) registrars
4. General practitioners are remunerated by
- a) fixed salaries b) fees c) the pay directly from the patients
5. Most medical services in the UK are free apart from
- a) dental care b) emergency care c) drugs and spectacles
6. Many British people prefer
- a) to use the NHS b) to be private patients c) to be treated abroad.

② Comment on the following quotations.

1. 97 % of the population uses the NHS.
2. Half of the hospitals in the UK are over 80 or 100 years old.
3. 70 % of the hospitals in the UK are small hospitals with about 200 beds.
4. Every working person has to pay a weekly contribution (even though he may never be ill), which covers about 15 % of the total cost.
5. Within the Basic Specialist Training there are up to 100 applicants for each available post for the more popular specialties.
6. At least 10 years are required for a British doctor-to-be to become an experienced specialist.