

Doctors in South Korea are Going on Strike

By Zara K.

There are plenty of problems happening in South Korea. Not only are the country having low birth rates, but their doctors are also going on strike as well! Having no doctors can be pretty dangerous, since that means more people will be likely to get sick or hurt with no help from hospitals.

The reason for the strike is because of overworking. Their shifts cap out at 36 hours, and their workweek can stretch to 88 hours.

The doctor-to-patient ratio of 2.6 per 1,000 people is one of the lowest among developed countries, according to data from the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. In contrast, top ranked Austria has 5.5 doctors per 1,000 people.



Doctors in South Korea refused to work because of underpayment and overworking jobs.

Park Dan, 33, had said he wanted to be an emergency room doctor to save lives. As a resident at Severance Hospital in Seoul, one of South Korea's biggest hospitals, he had said that he worked 100-hour weeks, often saw 20 patients every 60 minutes (which is one patient per 3 minutes), and had to hold off going to the bathroom for hours on end.

Since Feb 20, when the strike started, nearly 10,000 interns and residents, which is about a tenth of all doctors in the nation, have walked off the job. This is causing the government to suspend thousands of doctors licenses for going on strike and not coming back to work on time.

It's not only doctors that are leaving. Trainee doctors have also begun to leave. Since the sudden

walkout, about seventy percent of trainee doctors, or about 9,000, have left their posts, the health ministry says. It takes about ten years for a doctor to be fully trained. Trainee doctors are very important in the medical system in South Korea. In major hospitals, they usually make up a third of staff and are the first people to attend to patients.

Thanks to this problem, patients have been directed to smaller hospitals and clinics. Major hospitals have had up to half of their operations delayed, and nurses have been allowed to take some of the duties of doctors. The government has opened military hospitals and increased operating times for public clinics, and while there have been disruptions, the health system has not begun to get better.

One of the trainee doctors involved in the dispute had reportedly said he worked over one hundred hours a week at a top university hospital for two million won (about \$3,000) a month, even including overtime pay.



The doctors are determined to get a better medical system.

The government plans to increase admissions to medical schools from 2,000 to 3000 in 2025 to fill what they guess to be a large shortage of doctors by 2035. This is at least sixty-five percent more than usual, and they plan to continue making the numbers bigger to avoid having no doctors. This is not the first time doctors have asked for a government plan to increase medical school admissions.

Sources: [nytimes](#), [reuters](#)