

Fatigue Back-up Policy

You know yourself better than any of us! Be attentive to your personal signs of fatigue. The resident must monitor him/herself for the following signs suggestive of fatigue:

- Sluggish thought patterns, inability to concentrate, having to check work repeatedly, difficulty focusing
- Inability to maintain wakeful state in the absence of external stimulation, falling asleep in conference
- Feeling confused or forgetful
- Irritability, sudden anger, intolerance, apathy
- Nausea or stomach cramps unassociated with physical illness
- Tremors, particularly intention tremors while performing delicate procedures

Supervisors should also be mindful of this warning signs in others:

- Nodding off
- Closing eyes during rounds
- Makes errors on presentations
- Appears irritable
- Appears forgetful and confused

If you experience any of these symptoms and feel that you cannot perform your duties in a manner that is safe for self or patient, you must obtain rest. In the same manner, if supervisors or colleagues observe these signs and are concerned regarding safety of self or patients, the resident will be advised to obtain rest. A strategic nap can be very helpful. The resident should contact his/her senior resident or supervising attending to discuss going home/getting rest. The senior resident or supervising attending will make appropriate adjustments to the schedule to ensure adequate patient care coverage. The resident should contact the Residency Coordinator if the senior resident is unavailable, or if the “fatigued” resident is a senior resident. Contact someone to drive you home if needed.

Safe transition of patient care must occur prior to leaving to obtain rest.

In any instance where this policy is invoked, the program director is to be notified. He/she will oversee that there are no intended or unintended negative consequences for the resident who invokes the policy. For residents who use this on a frequent basis, the program director will review the circumstances and identify whether program changes are needed for resident education and patient safety.

Sometimes intermittent periods of fatigue can result in depression. If the resident experiences these symptoms, the Program Director will certainly be willing to help. If the resident would like to keep the situation confidential from the residency, the SIU GME office is able to make appropriate referrals. Adequate patient care and education require alert and responsive house staff. Appropriate rest is important. Be safe, be smart.

Please review the SIU Office of Graduate Medical Education Fatigue policy for suggestions on how to prevent fatigue.