

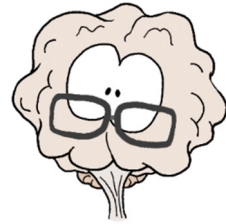


How to Be On Call

1) **Don't Panic**

2) **Don't Panic**

3) **Stay Organised.** You should know what you've done, what you've got left to do and where you are with everything else. If you have a manic hour, take 5 minutes to sit and do some job-list admin. Write down who bleeps and when, sometimes you will get multiple bleeps before you can ring them back. If you can always rely on your list then you can concentrate on the job at hand and not have to worry about anything else. Most importantly, if your list is organised you'll be able to hand-over safely on time and go home to rest!



4) **Take Breaks.** Medical degrees don't grant super-human abilities. During your 13hr on-call you will need to eat, drink and pee (aim for a urine output better than your patients!) - you need to take time to do all of these things. Whilst 5-10mins might seem a lot when you're been snowed under (see items 1 and 2), in the long run it will make you more efficient and safer. Who knows, you might even enjoy being on call! If you come up with a plan of action whilst having a drink, you can return to work feeling refreshed and organised.

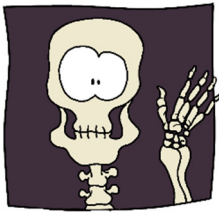
5) **Stay In Touch.** You will be working as part of a larger on-call team and cannot run the entire hospital single-handedly! If you're getting stuck or have any questions a quick bleep to your SHO or even Registrar could provide a lot of comfort. As a Med Reg said to me "there is no-one in the hospital who is not sick enough for the medical registrar". Especially early on, people will be thinking about you. If they haven't heard from you in a while this could be because (a) you're completely bossing the on-call, (b) you think you're bossing the on-call but in fact you're making everything worse, (c) you're crying in a corner somewhere. Occasionally popping onto AMU to see the registrar will give you an opportunity to show your (hopefully non-tear-streaked) face, ask any questions, and make you feel less isolated.

6) **Give and Take Good Handovers.** It's easy to just ask someone to "chase the U&Es", but you need to know why! Are we worried about potassium? Have they started diuretics? What should you do with the results? Do you need to prescribe them fluids? All valid questions! The hand-over-er should volunteer this kind of information, but don't be worried to ask for it if they don't (regardless of their seniority!). They will have a plan in mind and it will make your life easier when chasing 100 different blood results or scans.





7) **Make Use of Team Skills.** If you're bleeped about a sick patient and might be a few minutes before attending, ask the person who has bleeped you if they could help out. Could someone put a cannula in, send bloods, start fluids? Can they perform an ECG for when you arrive? Most nurses will be happy to give basic interventions without you being present to prescribe them provided you're explicit in instructions over the phone (remember to sign for things when you get there!). If this sounds like something you're not going to be able to deal with then you could ask for them to bleep your senior whilst you're on your way. However, you need to still see the patient yourself! At the very least you'll learn something and the SHO/Reg might not be happy for you to just bounce jobs to them.



8) **Be Nice.** Should be the case all the time! But everyone who has been on call will tell you they've lost their cool once or twice due to the pressure/exhaustion/lack of peeing. You will get just as much done by being nice as by being arse-y! And one day you'll need help quickly, and if you've just shouted at them then they might not be that speedy in responding. Also, if everyone smiles and has manners then everyone has a nicer day.

9) **Be Honest.** If you have a million jobs to do and it will take a couple of hours to get to a job, let them know! It might be that they would contact someone else in the meantime to organise things. If you have 100 discharges to do, try to find out which ones you need to do first (does pharmacy close soon? does the bed manager need specifically male orthopaedic beds?) - if the pressure on other people is reduced then the pressure on you will be.

10) **Enjoy Yourself!** Being on call is hard, sometimes you will feel like you want to cry, sometimes you will. Be reassured that it gets easier very quickly. And being on call will make you feel like a "real" doctor! You will see your own patients, make decisions and plans, and it will teach you skills you can apply back on your ward on Monday.

Have Fun!

The Medisense Team