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ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH SOCIETY OF GASTROENTEROLOGY

Press enquiries:

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**EUROPEAN WORKING TIME RULES
'MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO TRAIN DOCTORS PROPERLY'**

The European working time directive, which limits the hours employees are allowed to work, means junior hospital doctors cannot receive the training they need to become a consultant gastroenterologist, according to results of a survey presented at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the British Society of Gastroenterology today.

Furthermore, researchers have warned that without changes to the training system, the quality of the training of hospital consultants is at risk.

Because they were busy carrying out other work in the hospital, Junior Doctors could only clock up about half the number of training endoscopies (when a tube is passed through the mouth into the gut) needed to qualify as a Specialist, and just over three quarters of the number of the required training clinics.

A survey of Specialist Registrars (SpRs) in gastroenterology found that limits to working hours meant that they missed out on a quarter of the clinics they were supposed to attend and a third of the ward rounds led by a consultant.

Because they were working elsewhere, the junior doctors surveyed also missed out on meetings to discuss management of patients with cancer, and to discuss laboratory test results.

The current requirements are 'impossible to meet' researchers from Kings College Hospital, London, concluded.

Researcher Dr Ian Forgacs said: "Specialist Registrars training in gastroenterology are now doing many more hours in general medicine, but the hours available for training has gone down because of the European working hours directive."

"This squeeze on training hours means it is impossible to train people as we used to. Perhaps we have to expect less at the outset and train people to a more basic standard. Consultants in the future may have to be less specialised. Things can't go on as they

are. You can't shoehorn more training and other work into less and less time and expect the same quality of training."

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Note to Editor's:

The British Society of Gastroenterology Annual Scientific Meeting is taking place from 20th-23rd March, 2006 at the ICC, Birmingham