

Form a strong JMO/RMO association

Original article by: [Michael Tam](#)



*We want our meal vouchers,
dammit!*

Assuming that you work about 50 hours per week, you will be spending over a quarter of your life in and around hospital. If you are lucky and have good supervisors and mentors in the hospital, you may have people in the “system” that are both “on-the ground” and “proactive” in maintaining your interests.

The usual situation, however, is that you can be fairly certain that no one really cares about you. The only reason that your work hours are not excessively onerous, that you are paid rostered overtime, etc., is because of labour laws, your award and the guidelines as set by the PMC ([Postgraduate Medical Council](#)). Though these things offer a basic level of protection they are no good at providing any form of short or medium-term assistance with regards to industrial issues. The PMC, though a wonderful organisation, can really only act, “after the fact”.

Junior medical officers don’t have a union that actually makes any difference so to have any sort of collective bargaining power; the only path is to form a strong and functional JMO or RMO association within the hospital. It is a sad fact of life, but you will have to fight for basic things like payment of unrostered overtime, meal allowance or meal vouchers, fair working rosters and hours, adequate education and teaching and annual and study leave.

Meeting the administration with a representative body, especially with written memoranda and letters means that issues cannot be (as) easily ignored. Having a member sitting on the various hospital committees and meetings means that junior doctors have a “finger on the pulse” of the hospital. It is much more useful to argue against, e.g., the reshuffling of JMO positions at the time it is brought up, rather than later when it is handed down by administration.

The other function of a JMO or RMO association is of course its social responsibilities. Given that so much of your time will be around hospital, a strong association will also ensure that decisions and responsibilities are given out for duties such as newspaper subscriptions, organising social nights and dinners and a ball.