

Working life (GM)

This page provides useful information about the roles and responsibilities of geriatricians, where they work, who they work with and what they feel about their role.

"I became a specialist because I had a natural ability to work with older people. I enjoy finding the physical signs of illness, interpreting complex histories and abnormal physical findings and investigations to make an accurate [differential diagnosis](#) [1]. I enjoy using my communication skills to enable patients and families to cope with illness. I like the social aspects of the specialty – employing appropriate local and specialist knowledge to use patients' wider social structures to their benefit. Teaching and research are also particularly enjoyable aspects of this specialty." **Geriatric specialist.**



How your time is spent

There is no typical timetable for a geriatrician. Work is likely to include ward rounds in acute and/or community settings, acute [on call](#) [2] and outpatient work.

[On call](#) [2] and working hours

A programmed activity (PA) equals four hours so if a consultant works full-time, they do two PAs per day. On-call rotas vary considerably.

Almost all geriatricians take part in the unselected medical take (seeing hospital patients with acute medical conditions), or perform other out-of-hours work in clinical decision or medical assessment units. Many consultants will typically be working on 11 or 12 PA contracts per week within an acute hospital, but some work will be in community hospitals or other settings such as nursing or residential homes, home visits or day hospitals.

Time is also allocated to administration, teaching, examining and research.

Over 70% of consultants say they are routinely [on call](#) [2] at weekends.

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Geriatricians work alongside:

- nurses
- specialist nurses, eg dementia nurses
- physiotherapists
- occupational therapists
- speech therapists
- dieticians
- psychologists
- social workers
- medical secretaries and administrative staff

They also work closely with specialists in:

- palliative medicine
- neurology
- psychiatry
- surgery and anaesthetics

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Attractions and challenges of the role

Expand / collapse

The variety of work in a day and the [holistic](#) ^[3] approach to patient care are enjoyable aspects of the role. Working in multidisciplinary teams and making teams effective is rewarding. Making a difference to the quality of life of patients with multiple problems that can be treated or at least relieved by formulating a management plan for their care is also satisfying. Patients and their families are often very grateful for the help given and rehabilitating them back to independence is particularly rewarding.

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/geriatric-medicine/working-life>

Links

[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Differential_diagnosis

[2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#On_call

[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Holistic>