

Palliative medicine

Doctors in palliative medicine provide holistic [1], quality-of-life care to patients with serious, advanced and progressive illnesses that cannot be cured.

You'll provide expertise and support to colleagues, particularly those treating patients with complex conditions.



Life as a doctor in palliative medicine

Doctors in palliative medicine play an important and wide-ranging educational role, advising colleagues, families and other healthcare professionals while helping to ensure high standards of care.

Most of your patients will have advanced or progressive cancer, although increasingly palliative medicine doctors treat patients with a range of conditions such as heart failure, renal failure and neurological conditions.

It is essential to possess a deep understanding of the pathology and management of these conditions, which creates opportunities to develop a sub-specialty. You will need expertise in the pharmacological management of a range of problems and an understanding of drug interactions and side effects.

You'll be an essential part of specialist palliative care services, for clinical expertise, quality improvement, education, research management and research.

You can expect to work in hospitals, hospices and in the community with home visits being common. In some settings, such as specialist inpatient units, you'll have responsibility for the medical management of a patient. However, in most hospital settings, you'll play an advisory role alongside nurses who deliver most of the patient care.

At all times, you'll provide care that:

- strives to achieve the best quality of life for the patient for as long as possible
- involves managing and anticipating pain and other symptoms
- addresses the psychological, social and spiritual needs of the patient

- facilitates multi-professional support to provide joined-up care across care boundaries, enabling care at home and fewer avoidable admissions towards the end of life
- supports anticipatory planning with patients and professionals including advance planning in the last year of life
- supports end of life care that meets the needs and wishes of the individual and family
- supports the patient's family and significant others during the patient's illness and their bereavement

Common procedures and interventions include:

- [paracentesis](#) ^[2] (drawing off fluid from a natural cavity of the body)
- use of portable [ultrasound](#) ^[3]
- specialist pain techniques including management of [epidural](#) ^[4] infusions (a local anaesthetic procedure for blocking pain) occasionally in conjunction with a pain specialist
- management of central lines
- management of non invasive ventilation
- management of tracheostomies

How much can I earn?

You'll first earn a salary when you start your [foundation training](#) ^[5] after medical school. Find out details of current salary ranges for foundation and specialty training, [SAS doctors](#) ^[6] and consultants on the [Pay for doctors](#) ^[7] page.

How about the benefits?

- make a difference
- flexible and part-time working
- high income early in your career
- work anywhere in the world
- excellent pension scheme
- good holiday entitlement
- NHS discounts in shops and restaurants

Must-have skills

- excellent communication skills to manage a wide range of relationships with colleagues, and patients and their families
- emotional resilience, a calm temperament and the ability to work well under pressure
- teamwork and the capacity to lead multidisciplinary teams
- problem-solving and diagnostic skills
- outstanding organisational ability and effective decision-making skills
- first-class time and resource management for the benefit of patients

In addition, doctors in palliative medicine need to demonstrate:

- a high level of personal credibility as a clinician
- adaptability and resilience
- compassion, empathy, a flexible outlook and a sense of humour

- interests such as enhancing the quality of life for patients with life-limiting illnesses and improving end of life care and developing multicultural awareness
- well-developed skills in bedside clinical assessment (especially in settings and situations when routine investigations would not be appropriate)
- expertise in managing difficult pain, physical symptoms and psychological distress
- excellent decision-making in the context of changing and distressing situations using sound knowledge of ethical considerations

Entry requirements

Your first step is medical school. Typically, you'll need excellent GCSEs and three A or A* passes at A level including chemistry for a five-year undergraduate degree in medicine. Many medical schools also ask for biology and others may require maths or physics.

If you already have a degree, you could study for a four-year postgraduate degree in medicine.

You'll need to pass an interview and admissions test. You'll be asked to show how you demonstrate the NHS values such as compassion and respect.

Some medical schools look to recruit a mix of students from different backgrounds and geographical areas, so your educational and economic background and family circumstances could be considered as part of your application.

How to become a doctor in palliative medicine

After medical school, you'll join the paid two-year foundation programme ^[8] where you'll work in six placements in different settings.

After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid specialty training ^[9] to become a doctor in palliative medicine, which will take a minimum of six years.

You may be able to train part time, for example for health reasons or if you have family or caring responsibilities.

Where a career as a doctor in palliative medicine can take you

You could:

- specialise or conduct research
- teach medical students or postgraduate students in training
- get involved in research at universities, the NHS or private sector

- **Live vacancies**

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- **Senior Fellow in PCC, Retrieval Medicine & Palliative Care Medicine**

Oxford, OX3 9DU

Salary:

£70425.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Senior Fellow in PCC, Retrieval Medicine & Palliative Care Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[10]

- **Speciality Doctor Palliative Medicine**

Wrexham, LL13 7TD

Salary:

£59727.00 to £95400.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Speciality Doctor Palliative Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[11]

- **Palliative Care CNS**

Dartford, DA2 8DA

Salary:

£48270.00 to £54931.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Palliative Care CNS job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[12]

- **Consultant in Paediatric Medicine WAI in Palliative Care**

Sheffield, S10 2TH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Paediatric Medicine WAI in Palliative Care job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[13]

- **Care Coordinator (Palliative Care and Dementia)**

Waterlooville, PO7 5XP

Salary:

£13.48

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Portsmouth Group Practice

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Care Coordinator \(Palliative Care and Dementia\) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[14]

- **Macmillan Associate Specialist Palliative Care**

Stockport, SK2 7JE

Salary:

£38682.00 to £46580.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Stockport NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Macmillan Associate Specialist Palliative Care job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[15]

- **Clinical Lead in Specialist Palliative Care**

Norwich, NR4 7YA

Salary:

£46148.00 to £52809.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust
[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Clinical Lead in Specialist Palliative Care job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[16]

- **(Trainee) Advanced Clinical Practitioner - Palliative Care**

Liverpool, L9 7AL

Salary:

£53755.00 to £60504.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for \(Trainee\) Advanced Clinical Practitioner - Palliative Care job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[17]

- **Clinical Administrator Community Services (Palliative Care)**

Harlow, CM17 9JX

Salary:

£25475.00 to £27432.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

St Clare Hospice

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Clinical Administrator Community Services \(Palliative Care\) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[18]

- **Specialty Doctor/Clinical Fellow in Palliative Medicine**

Romford, RM4 1QH

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Saint Francis Hospice

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Specialty Doctor/Clinical Fellow in Palliative Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[19]

- **Rotational Occupational Therapist - Cancer and Palliative Care**

Bath, BA1 3NG

Salary:

£37338.00 to £44962.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Rotational Occupational Therapist - Cancer and Palliative Care job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[20]

- **Paediatric Palliative Care. Childrens Community Nursing Service**

Risca, NP11 6YF

Salary:

£46840.00 to £53602.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Paediatric Palliative Care. Childrens Community Nursing Service job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[21]

- **Paediatric Palliative Medicine Fellow**

Birmingham, B4 6NH

Salary:

£37068.00 to £57570.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Paediatric Palliative Medicine Fellow job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[22]

- **Consultant in Paediatric Palliative Medicine**

Sheffield, S10 2TH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Paediatric Palliative Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[23]

- **Medicines Management Pharmacy Technician Palliative Support**

Penarth, CF64 2XX

Salary:

£30420.00 to £37030.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Medicines Management Pharmacy Technician](#)

[Palliative Support job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[24]

- **Locum SPIN Paediatric Palliative Medicine Consultant**

Birmingham, B4 6NH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum SPIN Paediatric Palliative Medicine Consultant](#)

[job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[25]

- **Palliative End of Life Care Clinical Lead**

To be confirmed, PL31 2QT

Salary:

£46148.00 to £52809.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Palliative End of Life Care Clinical Lead job \(opens in a](#)

[new window\)](#) ^[26]

- **Training Programme Director for Palliative Medicine (KSS)**

Horley, RH6 7DE

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Secondment

Employer:

NHS England

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Training Programme Director for Palliative Medicine](#)

[\(KSS\) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[27]

- **Childrens Palliative Clinical Lead**

Worcester, WR5 3EZ

Salary:

£46000.00 to £52000.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Acorns Children's Hospice Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Childrens Palliative Clinical Lead job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[28]

- **Palliative Support Worker Hospice at Home**

Rawtenstall, BB4 7PL

Salary:

£12.21

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Rossendale Hospice

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Palliative Support Worker Hospice at Home job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[29]

- **Urgent Care Doctor**

London, NW8 9NH

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Hospital of St John and St Elizabeth

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Urgent Care Doctor job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[30]

- **Community Services, Palliative, End of Life Project Manager**

Reading, RG30 2BA

Salary:

£47810.00 to £54710.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West ICB

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Community Services, Palliative, End of Life Project Manager job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[31]

- **Specialty Doctor - Critical Care**

London, N18 1QX

Salary:

£59175.00 to £95400.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Specialty Doctor - Critical Care job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[32]

- **Resident Doctor Critical Care**

London, W1U 5NY

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

HCA Healthcare UK

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Resident Doctor Critical Care job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[33]

- **Specialty Doctor Acute Medicine**

Bournemouth, BH7 7DW

Salary:

£61542.00 to £99219.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Specialty Doctor Acute Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[34]

- **Consultant in Elderly Care Medicine**

Warwick, CV34 5BW

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

South Warwickshire University NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Elderly Care Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[35]

- **Consultant in Elderly Care Medicine**

Warwick, CV34 5BW

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

South Warwickshire University NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Elderly Care Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[35]

- **Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine**

Portsmouth, PO6 3LY

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[36]

- **Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine**

Wolverhampton, WV10 0QP

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[37]

- **Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine**

Scarborough, YO12 6QL

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[38]

- **Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine**

Sheffield, S10 2JF

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[39]

- **Specialty Doctor in Critical Care**

Gillingham, Kent, ME7 5NY

Salary:

£55825.00 to £90000.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Medway NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Specialty Doctor in Critical Care job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[40]

- **Specialist Doctor in Elderly Medicine**

Wakefield, WF14DG

Salary:

£100870.00 to £111441.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Mid Yorkshire Teaching NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Specialist Doctor in Elderly Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[41]

- **Specialty Doctor in Stroke Medicine**

Cwmbran, NP44 8YN

Salary:

£59727.00 to £95400.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Specialty Doctor in Stroke Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[42]

- **Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine & Anaesthesia**

Chester, CH2 1UL

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine & Anaesthesia job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[43]

- **Locum consultant In Elderly Care Medicine**

London, E13 8SL

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Barts Health NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum consultant In Elderly Care Medicine job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[44]

- **Further information**

These organisations have further information about being a doctor in palliative medicine, particularly as your career progresses. Take a look.

[Royal College of Physicians](#) ^[45]

[Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh](#) ^[46]

[Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow](#) ^[47]

[The Association for Palliative Medicine of Great Britain and Ireland](#) ^[48]

[The National Council for Palliative Care \(NCPC\)](#) ^[49]

And hear from people working as palliative care doctors:

A palliative medicine consultant (BMJ) [50]

Dr Richard Berman, consultant in palliative medicine (RCP) [51]

Dr Fiona Finlay – ST6, palliative medicine [52]

Other roles that may interest you

- Medical oncology [53]
- General practitioner [54]
- Geriatric medicine [55]
- Respiratory medicine [56]

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Holistic> [2]
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