

# HOME NEWS

**Survey finds medical officers  
scathing of government advice**

## Doctors resist nuclear war planning orders

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Widespread resistance to the Government's attempts to make health officials prepare for the aftermath of a nuclear war has emerged in the first national survey of war plans.

Twenty per cent of medical officers, the doctors responsible for drawing up the NHS plans, think they are a waste of time.

Just over half say they favour planning but only, according to many, to show the public that it will be well nigh impossible to care for the survivors.

The survey, by Dr David Josephs and Dr Peter Sims, of South Bedfordshire Health Authority, Luton, was made with the help of the World College of Physicians' faculty of community medicine and the Medical Campaign against Nuclear Weapons. They asked 234 medical officers in every UK health authority for their views on war plans and what stage their plans were at: 165 replied.

The Social Services Secretary, Mr Norman Fowler, told all health authorities nearly two years ago to draw up war plans. Over £1 million was taken from the NHS budget to pay for the exercise. Regional health authorities were told to appoint war planning officers,

and most medical officers have been sent on the Home Office civil defence course at Easingwold, Yorkshire.

The survey found that only 15 per cent of health authorities have completed war plans while 45 per cent have not started planning, and nearly 10 per cent of those have no intention of starting.

"The Department of Health's guidance is useless and the plans don't exist," said Dr Josephs, director of community medicine for South Bedfordshire.

The survey, published in the journal *Community Medicine*, shows that 55 per cent (91 doctors) were in favour of health service plans for a nuclear war, 20 per cent (33 doctors) were against, and 17 per cent (28 doctors) were indifferent.

Nearly 20 per cent of those preparing plans said government guidance was inadequate; 17 per cent were facing resistance from local councils (usually because they had declared themselves nuclear-free zones; and 16 per cent were struggling against staff indifference.

Community doctors should concentrate on informing the public about the havoc that would be wreaked by a nuclear war, Dr Josephs and Dr Sims conclude.

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