

Doctors strike ... deaths decrease

It's not the first time it's happened, but many observers were stunned to learn that a strike by medical doctors in Israel actually resulted in a decrease in the death rate.

According to a news article in the British Medical Journal, (BMJ) "Death rates have dropped considerably in most of the country since physicians in public hospitals implemented a programme of sanctions..."

Israeli medical doctors went on strike in March to protest a proposed four-year wage contract. They canceled hundreds of thousands of patient visits and many people expected a health crisis.

However, a survey of burial societies found that the death rate actually went down since the strike. The number of funerals in May dropped to 93 compared with 153 during the same month last year.

One funeral parlor manager told the BMJ reporter, "There definitely is a connection between the doctors' sanctions and fewer deaths. We saw the same thing in 1983 [when the Israel Medical Association applied sanctions for four and a half months]."

SOURCE: "Doctors' strike in Israel may be good for health," British Medical Journal , June 10, 2000.