Occupational stress and burnout among physicians

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Abstract

Introduction: Burnout has been defined as a psychological condition involving a continuous exposure to stressful work events leading to adverse consequences both in physical and mental health of workers. Among physicians, it is extremely hazardous given that it might affect their work and unintentionally harm the patients.

Objectives: The aim of this review was to collect data on the risk factors for burnout among physicians.

Methods: The review was based in articles published on PubMed database, using the following terms: “occupational stress”, “burnout”, “risk factors”, “predictive factors”, “healthcare professionals” and “physicians”.

Results: Studies showed that 25-60% of physicians reported symptoms or complaints related to burnout which also varies at different rates among different areas of specialty. Personal factors and workplace-related factors have been described and associated to burnout. As personal risk factors the studies describe higher levels of burnout in younger ages, unmarried status and, in women, being married with children. As workplace-related factors a positive association with burnout was found in physicians with less work experience, longer working hours, shift duty and working in higher-grade hospitals.

Discussion and Conclusions: Burnout has negative impact on physicians’ quality of life and for those who experience these symptoms there is a potentially increased risk for medical errors. This study highlights the importance of creating evaluation programmes for burnout in healthcare professionals, and the necessity to establish preventive protocols and specialized assistance.