

Stress of Being a Psychiatric Resident! is there Room for Improvement?

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Introduction: It is natural to assume that medical trainees have a large burden of stress during their training period especially the night-call duty.

Aim of the Work: to detect stress and burnout and investigate on-call related stress among a sample of Saudi psychiatric residents, and display some suggestions that may help to solve these problems.

Subjects and Methods: A sample of Saudi psychiatric residents joining a training program in different hospitals in Riyadh was selected to evaluate the stressors they face especially during on-calls. We compared them with internal medicine residents working in the same places. Burnout Self-test questionnaire and Perceived Stress Scale were used.

Results: Our sample composed of 26 psychiatric residents (PR) compared with 31 internal medicine residents (IMR). Half of the psychiatric group reported work itself to be a cause of stress. Only 7%

mentioned health to be a source of stress. The psychiatric residents reported time constraints, work overload, atmosphere and content, and lack of rest in less significant ratios. About half of the index participants suffered from sleep deprivation. Also, around 9% had sick leaves in the previous duration. The psychiatric residents got a mean score of 35.73 on the Burnout scale, and 17.92 on the Stress scale.

Conclusion: Work-related stress and burnout is found among psychiatric residents especially during on call. But in contrast to our expectations, the findings were somewhat surprising because the data of this study proved that psychiatric work conditions were better compared to internal medicine one. Also, we identified some suggestions that might help improving the stressful situation as shortening work and the on-call hours and diminishing the on-call frequencies.

Keywords: Stress, psychiatric resident

Abbreviations:

PR: Psychiatry Resident

IMR: Internal Medicine Resident

KSA: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

IQ: Intelligence Quotient

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INTRODUCTION

Residency is a stressful, overwhelming period during which residents work long hours to increase their knowledge base and experience. Resident physicians have tremendous responsibilities in the work-place yet may feel they control very little (Yamakage, et al. 2007; Lederer, et al. 2006; Thomas, 2004). Night-call duty is often synonymous with long working hours, reduced sleep and stress (Malmberg, 2007; Arnedt, et al. 2005). Chronic exposure to these factors can lead to stress disorders (burnout, drug addiction, car accident and suicide) and/or human error (Yamakage, et al. 2007).

Chronic stress and fatigue favor the development of exhaustion with professional dissatisfaction and poor work-performance (Lederer, et al. 2006). Continued sleep deprivation may alter mood and motivation and decrease

cognitive and psychomotor performance (Howard, et al. 2003). Fatigue may contribute to severe medical errors that affect patient safety (Lederer and Benzer, 2003).

Burnout is a pathological syndrome in which emotional depletion and maladaptive detachment develop in response to prolonged occupational stress (Thomas, 2004; Morais, et al. 2006; Lederer, et al. 2006). Burnout was observed in various medical subspecialties including dentists, psychiatrists, and pediatricians (Al-Rowais, 1996; Lederer, et al. 2006). Indeed it is a cumulative process that leads to the loss of physical and mental energy. Burnout has serious and dangerous implications to the individuals as well as to patients and the institution where they work (Morais, et al. 2006).

Hypothesis:

The authors hypothesized that psychiatric residency compared to internal medicine one is a very stressful work especially during on-call.

Aim of the Work:

The aim of this study was to detect stress and burnout and investigate on-call related stress among a sample of Saudi psychiatric residents, and display some suggestion that may help to solve these problems.