



A SURVEY ON THE WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE GENERAL PRACTITIONER'S AMBULATORY

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ABSTRACT

Fifty ambulatories in the Stara Zagora region had their labor conditions studied. An Inquiry Card was used which contained questions, concerning the factors of the working environment (including physical and stress-generating ones), of the profession and factors of the working process organization. Their effect over the work of the GP (General Practitioner) was established.

The working environment factors, which to a great extent disrupt the comfort during work, are noise and lighting.

The obtained data clarify the main reasons for the psycho-emotional stress of the GP. Heading the list are the difficulties in work process organization, the length of the workday, the relations between the different health institutions, the inadequate pay for the invested work.

This is a prerequisite for the development and approval of a strategy, which refers to the work safety and health protection of the GP.

Key words: GP, working conditions, safety, health at work, stress.

The main direction of the country policy for securing safe and healthful working conditions is a part of the strategic concept for the development of the country.

The goal of the present treatment is to examine the working conditions in the ambulatory of the General Practitioner. Our main task is to find the connection between the effects of the working environment factors and their effect on the medic's labor, the risk of over-stress of the organism, of quick fatigue which leads to deterioration of the General Practitioners' health.

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MATERIAL AND METHODS

A sociological survey was conducted on fifty General Practitioners from the Stara Zagora region. As a unit of measurement we used the General Practitioner, without consideration of the work experience and the acquired General Medicine specialty.

This survey is based on the usage of an Inquiry Card, which contains questions related to the working conditions in the General Practitioner's ambulatory and the effect of the different stress-generating factors on the General Practitioners as viewed from their own perspective. This inquiry is anonymous and reveals information on some key points. The received data has been processed with the use of the following statistical methods: data classification and alternative analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fifty Stara Zagora region General Practitioners have been surveyed. The number of the women is larger than that of the men (thirty seven women, seventy four per cent). This could be explained with the tendency to feminize some of the work fields. According to the statistic surveys of 2009 the number of women is largest in the area of health care (twenty seven point eight per cent). Men hold priority mostly in narrower surgical specialties.

The largest percentage is of the practitioners in the range of forty one to fifty years of age –

twenty one people, or forty two per cent of the surveyed, followed by the age group of thirty one to forty – fourteen people (twenty eight per cent), which is the artistically most active age.

In relation to the work experience, eighty four per cent show a work experience of more than ten years which shows that these doctors have started their practice with the beginning of the reform. The percentage of practitioners with work experience of three-four years, is small – five per cent. Eleven per cent of the practitioners have work experience of around seven-eight years (**fig. 1**)

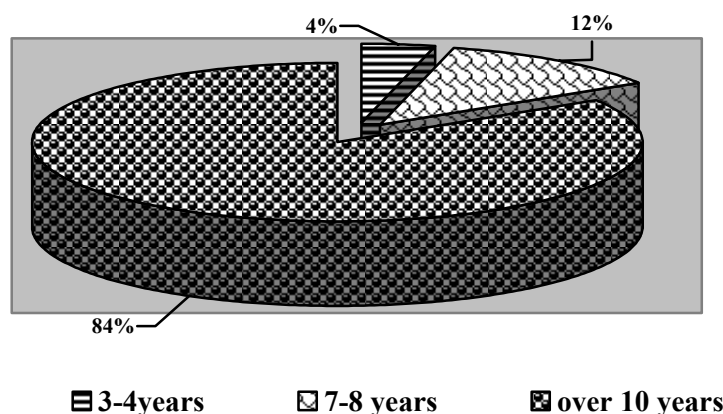


Fig. 1 Distribution by work experience in percentage

Fifteen people have acquired a specialty in General Medicine (thirty per cent). Nine people (eighteen per cent) state they have acquired a specialty in General Medicine, as well as some other specialty, and seven people (fourteen per cent) have acquired only a different from Medicine specialty. This goes to show the high quality work provided by the practitioners. Thirty eight per cent (nineteen people) have no specialty but are still in the process of tuition.

Sixty eight per cent of the surveyed practitioners state that the reference proportion between their patients' gender is uneven (men, women and children). This refers mainly to the practitioners whose base of operation includes towns as well as villages. Their patients count varies between a thousand to fifteen hundred.

A count of thousand or less patients is serviced by medics whose practice is limited to the village – fourteen per cent (seven people). This is due to a variety of demographic processes which leads to decrease of village population

count. The majority of the patients in the villages are over sixty five years old.

A large percentage of General Practitioners' practices hold patients from all age groups – fifty six per cent (twenty eight people). Twenty four of the surveyed practitioners state that they provide service for patients from nineteen to sixty five years old. Only three of the practitioners have patients up to the age of eighteen (six per cent). These are the pediatricians (**fig. 2**).

There were fourteen questions asked in the "Working conditions" section of the Inquiry Card, which referred to the factors of the working environment in the ambulatory.

All the ambulatories are consistent with the hygienic requirements as stated in Order № ПД-09-426 from 21.09.1999 by the Ministry of Health on the grounds of Article 20 from The Public Health Law. Those include the working premises – examination room, manipulation room and auxiliary rooms – waiting room, toilet and bathroom (1,2).

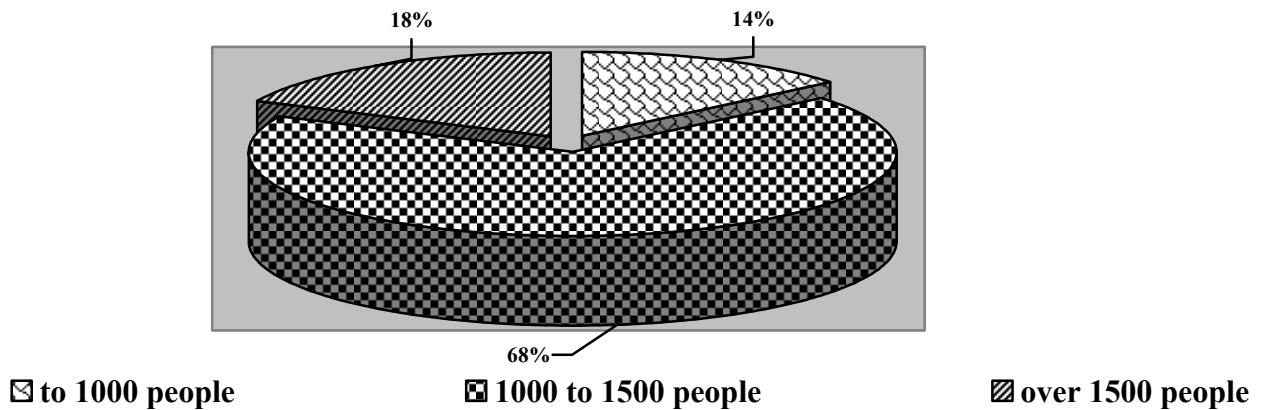


Fig. 2 Distribution of the patient count of the GPs in percentage

Eighty eight per cent of the surveyed people think that the microclimate (temperature, humidity, airflow speed) are consistent with the hygienic requirements. Twelve per cent gave the answer “Sometimes” – these are mostly medics whose practice is located in the village. The local heating with the use of wood and coal is harder there, especially during the winter season which results in difficulty in sustaining optimal temperature during work. Cooling is difficult during the summer months.

Forty two per cent of the ambulatories are equipped with air conditioners for heating. Twenty one per cent of the ambulatories are heated with electric appliances. Sixteen per cent of the medics rely on central heating. This is related to the low level of gasification of the Stara Zagora region (3).

The heating, ventilation, air-conditioning, plumbing and sewerage installations of the ambulatories are designed and built in conjunction with the respective standards. They are supplied with the necessary quantity of water, which satisfies the requirements of **NBS 2823-83** “Drinking water”.

The electric panels’ doors are labeled “Danger Electric Current” in ninety six per cent of the ambulatories. The medics are familiar with the evacuation plan of the building where the ambulatory is. All of them are equipped with fire extinguishing means – fire-extinguishers, water pumps and the medics are familiar with the instructions on how to extinguish a fire (4).

Noise and lighting are the working environment factors largely responsible for disturbing the comfort during work.

When we review the effect of noise on the working process of the General Practitioners, we must count the construction and repair activities done in the working area of the surveyed people. This is why this working environment factor is considered as temporary, one which undergoes change through time.

The distribution of the effect of the noise caused by sources close to the ambulatory is represented in per cent as follows: “yes” – twenty two per cent, “sometimes” – forty eight per cent and “no” – thirty per cent.

Seventy three per cent of the ambulatories are equipped with luminescent lighting. Lighting with the use of incandescent lamps is done mainly in the villages. It is related to the practitioner’s work with a video display.

For seventy six per cent of the medics the length of the workday is ten to twelve hours. They spend more than half of their time on the computer which is due to both their clinical and administrative work. All this leads to more mistakes and fatigue of the ocular analyst at the end of the workday. Fourteen per cent of the medics have an eight hour workday and 10 per cent of the medics work nine hours per day.

The work of the General Practitioner is subjected to a variety of stress-generating factors (6). The highest stress-generating effect from the surveyed factors of this profession has the following:

1. Discrepancy between invested labor and remuneration – forty four people (eighty eight per cent) are dissatisfied with their financial remuneration;
2. Intense work pressure – thirty eight people (seventy six per cent);
3. Opportunity for professional development – twenty eight people (fifty six per cent) say “no”, seventy six people (fourteen per cent) say “yes”, fifteen people (thirty per cent) say “sometimes”.

Ninety two per cent of the surveyed people note the frequent change in statutory regulations as a stress-generating factor. Sometimes there are contradictions with the contract partner, important tasks need to be resolved for a short period of time and often there are problems in the communication between different specialists and consultants. This results in additional stress on the General Practitioners and in sixty two per cent of the cases they consider quitting their current job (5).

CONCLUSIONS

1. The ambulatories of the fifty surveyed General Practitioners are organized and equipped in conjunction with the hygienic requirements as stated in Order № ПД-09-426 from 21.09.1999 by the Ministry of Health on the grounds of Article 20 from The Public Health Law.
2. The microclimate elements (temperature, humidity, airflow speed) are within the set standards in eighty eight per cent of the cases. “Sometimes” there are deviations in twelve per cent of the cases, mainly in the ambulatories of medics, whose practice is located in the village.
3. Noise and lighting are the working environment factors largely responsible for comfort disturbance during work. The continuous work with a video display causes

changes in the ocular analyst in a large group of the practitioners.

4. The long workday - ten to twelve and more hours, is an important issue and the main source of stress on the work place for seventy six per cent of the practitioners.
5. The work of the General Practitioner is a subject to a variety of stress-generating factors: discrepancy between invested labor and remuneration – eighty eight per cent of the surveyed people are dissatisfied with their financial remuneration, the opportunity for professional development, problems in the relations between the different health institutions.
6. A necessary part of the General Practitioner’s adequate work is the promotion of good health at the work place in the ambulatory.

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