

Physician Burnout in Taiwan

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Objective: To investigate the prevalence of occupational burnout among domestic physicians in Taiwan and its association with sleep, work and demographic factors.

Methods: A cross-sectional questionnaire survey was conducted from December 31st, 2017 in all practicing physicians rostered in Taiwan Medical Association (total n=45,213). Descriptive statistics were used to present the sample distribution of sleep, work and demographic characteristics as well as prevalence of physicians' burnout in personal, work, and client domains. One-way analysis of variance was used to determine the individual impact of sleep, work and demographic factors on the degree of physicians' burnout in three domains. Factors with significant impacts were used as predictors in multivariate logistic regression to examine their adjusted contribution in the prediction models of Taiwanese physicians' burnout.

Results: 1267 physicians participated, among which 808 provided valid samples. The prevalence of burnout in the personal, work and client domains that reach moderate to severe level of scores were seen in 24.75%, 24.13% and 10.77% of the valid samples, respectively. Risk factors include higher level of serving institution, lower clinical work experiences, being single, sleep timing mismatch between work and free days, sleep disorders (insomnia or sleep apnea) and habitual drinking. Among them, the sleep timing mismatch between work and free days, implicating an existence of the social jetlag, is the common risk factor for all three domains of burnout, and is modulated by the interaction of physicians' clinical experiences and their marital status, with the latter being also modulated by the level of institution where the physician provide services. In addition, the habitual drinking is not only a mediator of work-related burnout, but also a modulator of burnout in personal and client domains. Notably, the weekly working hours is not found related to the physician burnout in the three domains but positively correlated with the risk of poor sleep.

Conclusion: This study suggests that about 1/4 of Taiwanese physicians exhibit burnout symptoms. Given the strong association between burnout and increased risk of professional dysfunction as well as decreased personal well-being, the multitude of risk factors addressed in this study should call for actions in the healthcare workplace.

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