

Burnout among Intern Medical Officers in selected Teaching Hospitals: a cross-sectional descriptive study

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Introduction & Objectives

Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment, occurring due to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors. Burnout is well recognized among medical doctors. Identifying and, where possible, treating burnout is critical, as it has a major impact on the quality of life of doctors, patient safety and health outcomes.

Research on burnout in the medical community of Sri Lanka is scarce. Our objective was to determine the prevalence and risk factors for burnout among intern medical officers (IMOs), who are likely to be at high risk.

Methods

Consenting IMOs in Medical, Surgical, Paediatrics and Obstetric and Gynaecology Units of Teaching Hospitals in Colombo South, Colombo North, Peradeniya, Kandy and Karapitiya were administered three standard, validated, self-administered questionnaires on burnout.

Results

124 IMOs participated; 79(62.9%) were females. Mean age was 27.4 years. Oldenburg Burnout Inventory: 75/124(60.5%) suffered from disengagement, and 77/124(62%) from exhaustion.

Abbreviated Maslach Inventory: 47/124(38%) suffered from emotional exhaustion, 20/124(16.1%) from depersonalization, and 6/124(5%) from poor personal accomplishment.

Work and lifestyle-related causes (ie heavy and monotonous work-load, lack of control over work-load, chaotic work environment, inadequate rest and sleep, lack of help, and absence of a supportive relationship) were significantly associated with higher burnout scores.

Conclusion

Burnout appears to affect approximately 1 in 3IMOs in our sample. Most work and lifestyle related risk factors for burnout are modifiable. Further studies are needed to identify causes of burnout among IMOs. A system to detect and treat burnout, particularly among IMOs, is an urgent necessity.