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QUALITY OF LIFE AND BURNOUT IN PAEDIATRIC DENTISTS: NO CAUSE FOR ALARM?

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Aim:

To study quality of life and professional burnout among paediatric dentists working in municipal dental clinics of St. Petersburg.

Paediatric dentists are considered to be the group of specialists most exposed to occupational stress. Their health status, quality of life (QoL) and working conditions may have impact on quality of their working activities. During the last decade burnout syndrome has been increasingly reported among dentists. It may lead to QoL impairment and negative changes in health. By now data about QoL and burnout syndrome in paediatric dentists is lacking.

Methods

One hundred and twenty dentists from 8 municipal dental clinics of St. Petersburg that provide dental care for children were included in the study. All the dentists completed generic QoL questionnaire RAND SF-36, Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), and checklist consisting of 10 questions regarding demographic characteristics. Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment were evaluated by MBI; the final scores were categorized as high, moderate and low based on standard test scores. Data were analyzed using ANOVA and chi-squared test.

Study Population

93% of participants were female, mean age – 47.2 years \pm 11.3, the mean work experience – 19 years. According to specialisation the distribution was as follows: paediatric dentists – n=83, orthodontic dentists – n=25, dental surgeons

– n=12. The above subgroups did not differ by age and gender ($p>0.05$).

Results:

Social, emotional functioning, mental health and vitality in dentists working in municipal dental clinics were lower than in control group ($p<0,05$). No significant differences between subgroups of dentists according to specialisation were found, except lower physical functioning of dental surgeons ($p<0,05$). Most dentists experienced professional burnout. High degree of professional burnout was found in 7,5% of paediatric dentists according to all three scales; 62,5% had high degree of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation with an average or low level of reduction of professional achievements; 10% had high degree of burnout according to one scale; 20% – no burnout. Significant differences were found between groups of orthodontists, dental therapists and dental surgeons. The level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation was significantly higher in dental surgeons and in compared with dental therapists orthodontists ($p<0.05$).

Paediatric dentists working in municipal dental clinics exhibit reduced social and mental well-being and vitality level. The majority of paediatric dentists working in municipal dental clinics reported symptoms related to burnout syndrome. The data obtained emphasise the necessity for prophylactic measures of burnout syndrome and QoL maintenance among paediatric dentists.

Conflict of Interests/Comments: Nothing to declare.