

HEALTH RISKS EXPERIENCED BY NURSES IN EMERGENCY CARE*

Vilma Daujotaitė¹, Rasa Juozapavičienė², Violeta Kamantauskienė³

¹Emergency Medical Service Station, Lithuania

²Kaunas University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Lithuania

³Kaunas University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Lithuania

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Introduction

Healthcare workers provide patient care in the environment that is considered to be one of the most unsafe and risky work environments.

Professional hazards include biological, chemical, physical, ergonomic, psychosocial as well as hazards of fire, explosion electricity. They all cause danger for the life, safety and well being of healthcare workers [6].

Emergency medical care professionals work under stress as they face sudden deaths, traumas, patient resuscitation, their actions require fast and creative decisions. They interact with suffering patients and their relatives, work environment is often rapidly changing. It may effect physical and psychological health of emergency care nurses.

The research aim was to identify health risks experienced by nurses in emergency care. The aim was achieved conducting semi-structured interviews. Interviews lasted about 25 minutes, were recorded, transcribed and analyzed. A questionnaire containing 12 open questions was prepared in advance for the data collection. 15 nurses of emergency medical service station were interviewed, work experience in the emergency care field not less than one year was required.

The research results revealed that emergency medical care nurses encounter physical, psychological, ergonomic, biological and chemical risk factors. The research also proved that work in emergency medical care service results in the certain health changes of emergency medical care nurses.

Physical risk factors. The Respondents indicated night shifts as a physical risk factor that effects body senses, concentration and communication mode. Another physical risk factor was body injuries such as traumas, falls, slips, accidents. The risk of getting infected with respiratory and infectious diseases, heavy workload were found as physical risks as well.

Psychological risk factors. Statements of evidence during the interviews highlighted stress as the major psychological risk factor. It included stress caused by specific calls such as suffocating patients, children. Internal pressure, constant thinking about work situations, fear to fall ill, fear of accidents, physical and psychological violence were found among psychological risk factors.

Ergonomic risk factors. Among ergonomic risk factors indicated by the respondents were changes in bone and muscle systems (spine pain, whole body pain, neck and arm muscle pain).

Biological risk factors. The Respondents indicated microtraumas with sharp instruments, contacts with body liquids as the main biological risk factors.

Chemical risk factors. The data collected during the interviews disclosed allergy and skin changes caused by disposable gloves as well as allergic reactions caused by medications as the main chemical risk factors.

Conclusion

The above mentioned physical, psychological, ergonomic, biological and chemical risk factors reduce work effectiveness of nurses in emergency medical care and cause physical and psychological health conditions such as sleep disorders, nutrition and metabolism changes, stomach disorders, reproductive system disorders, conditions of cardiovascular system. Changes of psychological health results in fears, obsessive /distressing thoughts and sadness.

Keywords: *Emergency medical care, Ambulance, Health conditions, Emergency nurse.*

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Contacts:

Violeta KAMANTAUSKIENĖ
 Kaunas University of Applied Sciences,
 Faculty of Medicine, Lithuania
 E-mail: violeta.kamantauskiene@go.kauko.lt