



ELSEVIER

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

British Journal of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery xxx (2017) xxx–xxx

BRITISH
Journal of
Oral and
Maxillofacial
Surgerywww.bjoms.com

Review

Could exercise improve mental health and cognitive skills for surgeons and other healthcare professionals?

D.A. Parry^a, R.S. Oeppen^b, M.S.A. Amin^c, P.A. Brennan^{d,*}^a Department of Anatomy, King's College London Hodgkin Building, London, SE1 1UL, UK^b University Hospital Southampton, Southampton SO16 6YD, UK^c King's College London, London, SE1 1UL, UK^d Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth PO6 3LY, UK

Accepted 5 March 2018

Abstract

Workplace-related illness is common in the UK, and in healthcare more than five million working days over 10 years have been lost as a result. Occupational stress is well known and can affect clinicians at any stage, yet many healthcare professionals continue to work with this or other psychological problems (including anxiety, chronic fatigue, and burnout) as they do not wish to let their colleagues down. Mental health issues might be dismissed, particularly in surgery, because there is a misconception that surgeons can cope better with stress than those working in other specialties, and are better protected from clinical burnout. The benefit of exercise on physical health is clear, but its role in the maintenance of good mental health and well-being should not be underestimated. As society adopts an increasingly sedentary lifestyle, exercise for many has a lower priority than other activities. In this article we give an overview of the mental health issues that might affect doctors and surgeons, and explore how exercise can benefit our well-being and clinical performance.

© 2018 The British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Exercise; mental health; burnout; clinical performance; healthcare; human factors

Introduction

Work-related illnesses are common in the UK, and an estimated 1.1 million people suffer from conditions that are caused by, or made worse by, work.¹ Within the last decade more than five million working days were lost in healthcare and the social sector because of occupational health issues, with 100 000 of these being in 2014 alone.^{1,2}

The work of doctors and surgeons can give rise to both physical and mental problems,^{1,2} and occupational stress can occur when their physiological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses to the workload are overwhelming.³

In a recent survey, 38% (1404/3695) of surgeons thought that work had adverse effects on their own health, and 79.1% (2919/3695) of doctors identified stress or the work-life balance, and overall workload, to be important factors.⁴ Clinicians' skills are the focus of much research, but their psychological health is often ignored,⁵ particularly in surgery, which can be both emotionally and physically demanding.³ A possible reason for this is the long-held belief that surgeons cope better with stress and therefore have greater protection from clinical burnout.¹

In this review, we provide an overview of the essential mental health issues to which doctors and surgeons may be exposed, and show how exercise can be beneficial. It has long been thought that exercise is necessary for a healthy mind and a healthy body (both of which are considered important by healthcare practitioners),⁶ and as lifestyles become more

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 2392 286736; Fax: +44 2392 286089.
E-mail address: Peter.brennan@porthosp.nhs.uk (P.A. Brennan).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bjoms.2018.03.005>

0266-4356/© 2018 The British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

sedentary in western societies,⁷ there is a need to explore the benefits of exercise for practising clinicians.

The contribution of the workplace to poor health and related problems

Smith et al reported that 63% of National Health Service (NHS) staff in their study had worked when they were unwell,⁴ and doctors have reported that physical and mental stressors caused by pressure at work may have resulted in illness.⁴ Other factors that can increase job-related stress and burnout amongst surgeons and other healthcare professionals are constant reorganisation and change in the NHS.⁸

Retirement ages are increasing and medical careers are therefore becoming longer.⁴ Increased stress at any stage can lead to poor job satisfaction,^{3,9} so to maintain a healthy workforce, physical and mental factors should be optimised to prevent clinicians from leaving the profession and to make it more attractive.

Exercise has both psychological and physiological benefits that help to combat stress.¹⁰ It also has a positive impact on mood, and can reduce depression and anxiety.¹¹

Clinicians are susceptible to work-related illnesses because they often have to deal with life-and-death situations; they work long hours, and expectations are high.^{2,3} Stress alone, or that which arises from other health issues, contributes to many mental health problems such as depression, burnout, disrupted sleep, and a poorer quality of life.^{12,13} The prospect of litigation against doctors, another factor that is often overlooked, can be a source of dissatisfaction in the profession,¹⁴ and chronic exposure to stress can result in anxiety, guilt, and fear of accountability.¹⁵ A surgical career can have a negative impact on personal relationships, and some surgeons are not adequately supported by their family.¹ Illness will probably be worsened if family relationships are poor. These points might help to explain why recruitment to surgical specialties is poor, with some disciplines having barely more than one applicant for each position.

A recent study found that emotions, which are felt constantly throughout the day (including before, during, and after a surgical list), can have an impact on a surgeon's life at work and at home.¹⁵

Recognising burnout

A busy, high-pressure, high-volume clinical workload can contribute to problems with health.^{15,16} A surgical career often involves long hours (even when the European Working Time Directive (EWTB) is strictly observed) and busy on calls that can potentially disrupt sleep, and a combination of these and the emotional stress that results from dealing with life-or-death situations can result in burnout.^{3,5}

It is vital that we recognise potential burnout in our colleagues as well as ourselves, as it can affect the quality of care we give to our patients, and have a detrimental effect on our own health.^{4,5} Occupational burnout interferes with the ability to practice and can lead to medical errors,³ so surgeons should ensure that they have adequate mental health protection in place. Burnout may also affect clinical careers, as mental health issues can limit professional success.^{17,18} Surgeons and others (including dentists) who suffer from it are more likely to have suicidal thoughts,^{1,3,9,19} and many UK surgeons are now presenting to mental health clinics.¹⁹

What about exercise?

Regular exercise can help to counteract negative and depressive symptoms, but many doctors and surgeons do not prioritise a balanced lifestyle, and so neglect their own health.²

Irrespective of age, regular, moderately-intensive physical activity is beneficial and can help to protect against stress-related mental disorders.¹² It may also reduce anxiety, which can lead to a poorer quality of life that perpetuates the situation.^{1,15} Studies have found greater reductions in anxiety in people who are aerobically fit.¹¹ Regular exercise can allow clinicians to escape mentally from their work, and it also improves their mental energy and concentration.¹⁰

The beneficial effects of exercise on stress, fatigue, and burnout

Burnout, which is defined as emotional exhaustion that leads to a negative mental attitude, lack of perceived self-achievement, and poorer care of others, is well-known to occur in medicine and surgery.³ However, it is sometimes exacerbated by doctors who are unwilling to take the necessary time off work to recover⁴ because they think they are indispensable.

Puetz et al found that 7/36 adults (20%) suffered from persistent fatigue that was related to physical inactivity.¹⁶ Clinicians commonly experience fatigue-related burnout, which can have negative effect on health, and can raise the risk of developing cardiovascular disease.^{4,10}

Fatigue not only limits the ability to work, but also has an adverse effect on communication and teamwork.^{1,10} Lack of communication within a team can be initiated by fatigue in any of the members, and can result in errors being made. Work-related fatigue is also linked to a poorer quality of sleep, such as waking often during the night, reduced duration of sleep, and feeling tired on waking.¹⁰ While the European Working Time Directive has reduced the maximum time that a doctor can legally work to 48 hours/week to minimise sleep deprivation and excessive amounts of work,⁵ many of the changes in shift patterns, unsocial working hours, and lack of continuity to follow patients, increase fatigue.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/8696719>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/8696719>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)