Burnout Syndrome and Demotivation Among Health Care Personnel. Managing Stressful Situations: The Importance of Teamwork

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Abstract Almost one-third of our lives is spent in the workplace, where much of our interaction with others takes place and where we are exposed to stressful situations. Work-related stress has consequences for the individual’s physical and mental health. Stress and professional burnout syndrome are the main consequences of work situations characterized by a constant state of tension. Stress is the second leading cause of absenteeism in the European Union, and around 12% of European workers are currently affected by burnout syndrome. It is therefore vital to identify demotivated and stressed staff in both large organizations (hospitals and clinics) and smaller centers (private practices) so as to facilitate preventive measures and ensure early intervention in situations of stress, with a view to improving the performance of work teams.

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People spend almost a third of their lives at work. The workplace is where many of our interpersonal relationships are developed and where our vital interests are channeled. Work is therefore one of the key activities of human beings, and stressful situations at work and work-related stress are among the most important consequences for people’s physical and mental health.

Work-Related Stress

Stress is defined as a relationship or transaction in terms of adaptation and interaction between a person and the setting or environment that can place a burden on individual well-being and lead to psychological disorders, unhealthy conduct, and, ultimately, disease. Stress can be a consequence of multiple factors and circumstances. However, due to its importance in people’s lives, the world of work is one of the main generators of stress. Therefore, stress must be understood as an interactive problem involving both the worker and the organization.

Work-related stress has important consequences both for people (Table 1) and for organizations. Many studies have demonstrated the relationships between stress and health. In dermatology, for example, psychosocially induced stress can trigger or exacerbate numerous skin diseases, including rosacea, lichen planus, various types of eczema including seborrheic dermatitis, psoriasis, and many others. Stress is one of the main risk factors for heart disease, stroke, chronic pain, etc. It plays a role in the appearance of burnout syndrome and is linked to workplace harassment (or “mobbing”) and adaptive disorders. It also affects quality of life in general.

Burnout Syndrome

Burnout syndrome develops as a result of situations of chronic work-related stress. According to Maslach and Jackson, burnout syndrome affects workers’ emotional responses and includes symptoms such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion, which refers to the progressive loss of the capacity to dedicate oneself to work, represents an individual dimension of burnout. Depersonalization pertains to the worker’s interpersonal context and entails distancing oneself emotionally from the users of one’s services by adopting impersonal, insensitive, or hardened behaviors.

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