

Work-related well-being of Finnish anesthesiologists

Lindfors P.M.*, Nurmi K.E, Elovainio M., Leino T.

*Hjelt-Institute and Helsinki University Central Hospital, Department of Anesthesia and Intensive Care, Helsinki, Finland

The aim of this study was to discover details of the work-related well-being of Finnish anesthesiologists. In 2004, a cross-sectional postal survey including all 550 working Finnish anesthesiologists produced a total of 328 responses (60%); 53% were men.

Over two-thirds of the respondents felt stressed. The most important causes of stress were work and combining work with family. Their main worries were: excessive workload and time constraints, especially being on call, organizational problems, and fear of harming patients. On-call workload correlated with burnout. Being frequently on call was correlated with severe stress symptoms--symptoms associated with sick leaves. Women were more affected by stress than men.

The respondents enjoyed fairly high job and life satisfaction. Job control and organizational justice were the most important correlates of these wellness indicators. Work-related factors were more important in males, whereas family life played a larger role in the well-being of female anesthesiologists. Women had less job control, fewer permanent job contracts, and a higher domestic workload.

Of the respondents, 31% were willing to consider changing to another physician's specialty and 43% to a profession other than medicine. The most important correlates for these attitudes were conflicts at the workplace, low job control, organizational injustice.

One in four had at some time considered suicide. Respondents with poor health, low social support, and family problems were at the highest risk for suicidality. The highest risks at work were conflicts with co-workers and superiors, on-call-related stress symptoms, and low organizational justice. The risk for suicidality doubled with each additional factor.

On-call work-burden, job control, fairness of decision-making procedures, and workplace relationships should be the focus in attempts to increase the work-related well-being of anesthesiologists.

Ref: Lindfors Pirjo, 2010. The work-related well-being of Finnish anesthesiologists. Doctoral thesis, University of Helsinki, Helsinki. www.thesis/helsinki.fi