Chapter 58

Examination of Quality of Life in Workplace Environments

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ABSTRACT

Healthcare organizations are commonly known to be high-stress environments due to the life-or-death nature of the work. Thus, examining the quality of life in healthcare professionals is of significance to the field. Quality of life is a common measurement in healthcare, typically in determining the effectiveness of treatment on patients. But, quality of life in healthcare workers is often overlooked. A review of the literature was conducted regarding factors that impact quality of life of workers in healthcare environments. The areas of occupational stress, burnout, and workplace violence were explored in depth in order to understand the potential negative consequences of each on quality of life in healthcare professionals. In comparison to other industries, healthcare professionals are at an increased risk for occupational stress, burnout, and workplace violence. Effectively managing these areas could have a positive impact on quality of life in healthcare workers.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding how to enhance satisfaction of employees in the workplace is of significance to managers, and quality of life is an important construct that relates to job satisfaction and overall wellbeing of employees. Quality of life is an estimate of an individual's health status, defined as satisfaction or happiness within eight dimensions: vitality, physical functioning, bodily pain, general health perceptions, physical role functioning, emotional role functioning, social role functioning, and mental health (Ware, Kosinski, & Gandek, 2000). Quality of life is a common measurement in healthcare, in determining the effectiveness of treatment on patients. But, quality of life in healthcare workers is often overlooked. Healthcare organizations are commonly known to be high-stress environments due to the life-or-death nature of the work. Thus, examining the quality of life in healthcare professionals is of significance, and is related to one of the Healthy People 2020 Occupational Safety & Health Objectives, which is to

"increase the proportion of employees who have access to workplace programs that prevent or reduce employee stress" (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2017).

The objectives of this article are to identify and examine the factors that impact quality of life in healthcare professionals and to identify solutions and recommendations for how healthcare managers can assist in reducing the impact of these factors in the workplace. This topic is timely because the well-being of healthcare professionals is important to the effective functioning of the health system (Selanu, Thornicroft, Fekadu, & Hanlan, 2017). While there are many factors that impact quality of life, this article will focus on four factors that are most prevalent in healthcare settings: occupational stress, burnout, workplace violence, and employee well-being. Research has shown that occupational stress, burnout, and workplace violence all can have a significant impact on employee well-being and overall quality of life (Brandstatter, Job, & Schulze, 2016).

BACKGROUND

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) introduced the Triple Aim- enhancing patient experience, improving population health, and reducing costs- as the model for optimizing performance in the health system (Berwick, Nolan, & Whittington, 2008). Recently, there has been increased interest in changing the Triple Aim to a Quadruple Aim, thereby addressing the goal of improving the life of healthcare professionals (Bodenheimer & Sinsky, 2014). This push for a change even further highlights the significance and timeliness of exploring the negative consequences that affect quality of life in healthcare professionals.

Often healthcare professionals find it difficult to seek help for their health problems for a variety of reasons, such as workload and the fear of stigma and adverse effects on their career (Brooks, Gerada, & Chalder, 2016). Particular types of healthcare professionals are even more susceptible to negative consequences that impact quality of life. For example, healthcare professionals working in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) are at higher risk of stress, burnout, and anxiety (Vandevala, Pavey, Chelidoni, Change, Creagh-Brown, & Cox, 2017). Workplace violence is also an area of concern.

Healthcare managers have a pivotal role in healthcare organizations as they set the professional standard, oversee quality and training, and serve as role models (Maza, Shecter, Eizenberg, Segev, & Flugelman, 2016). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "a healthy workplace is one in which workers and managers collaborate to use a continual improvement process to protect and promote the health, safety, and well-being of all workers and the sustainability of the workplace" (Burton, 2010). Thus, implications for how managers can assist in reducing stress, burnout, and workplace violence, and enhance employee well-being, will be explored.

FOCUS OF THE ARTICLE

Occupational Stress

Stress has been reported to be increasing in all full-time employees in the U.S. by as much as a 31% increase from 1983 to 2009 (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts, 2012). Stress can have a negative impact on individuals, such as mental health issues or burnout, and an impact on organizations, such as reduced

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