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Occupational Stress in Health Professionals. Contributions to Prevention by Educational Programs

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PURPOSE: In recent years a large number of studies have pointed out the effects of occupational stress both on the health of health professionals, and on the quality of patient care. Occupational stress is also recognised as having serious costs for Health Organizations. The majority of these studies have identified sources of stress and coping resources in health professionals and its results emphasised differences in the individual appraisal of stressors which, to some extent, may be due to professional issues. These results, are of importance in the development of more effective interventions (both educational and clinical) to reduce stress among these professionals. **RELEVANCE:** Due to its professional characteristics Physiotherapy is a high stress risk profession. The main purpose of the present paper is to present the results of a study on stress and coping in health professionals and to point out some contributions to the development of a more effective and discriminative educational program that can prepare Physiotherapists to the emotional and social challenges on their profession. **SUBJECTS:** The sample include 150 health professionals (54 Pharmacists; 55 Physiotherapists; 41 Radiotherapists). **METHOD AND MATERIAL:** The subjects answered a questionnaire including: demographic variables; three subjective scales (for stress; self-efficacy and job satisfaction); a Occupational Stressors Inventory; and the Coping Resources Inventory for Stress. They were, also, given three dilemmas (potential stress situations) and asked to write about their perceptions of those situations, and their ways of dealing with them. **ANALYSES:** The statistical program SPSS, as well as procedures point by the scales authors, were used to interpret the data. The significations (about the three dilemmas) were analysed by means of a developmental sequence already used in several similar studies. **RESULTS:** The results show that differences in professional occupation, as well as in some demographic variables, may influence subject's identification of sources of occupational stress. As for the coping resources, the results reinforce the conclusions of other similar studies that suggested the importance of tailoring educational programs to each health professional group.