Iran J Public Health, Vol. 45, No.10, Oct 2016, pp.1371-1372

Letter to the Editor

Health-related Quality of Life for Scientific Editors in China

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(Received 14 Mar 2016; accepted 11 Apr 2016)

Dear Editor-in-Chief

Scientific and technical journals are considered vital media for the dissemination of scientific information. Currently, scientific editors are regarded as the primary business person for scientific journals. Therefore, the supervisory role of scientific editors is as an academic executor. The overdrafts and stressors derived from endless daily tasks can lead to job burnout for most scientific journal editors. Hence, the increasing physical and psychological demands on scientific editors may contribute to a reduction in scientific quality. This neglected issue therefore warrants investigation.

Between Nov 2013 and Jan 2014, 1200 editors (engaged in editorial work for >1 year, the samples consisted of chief editors, associate editors, copy editors, and text editors) from 180 scientific journals were invited to participate in our study. A questionnaire related to lifestyle factors, such as the amount of physical exercise per week, amount of sleep (h/d), number of breakfasts eaten per week, punctual meal times (per week), cigarette smoking (daily number), and alcohol intake (per week) was assessed. Meanwhile, the Health-related Quality of Life (HRQOL) was evaluated by eight domains SF-36 scale [physical function (PF); role physical (RF); bodily pain (BP); general health (GF); vitality (VT); social function (SF); role emotion (RE); and mental health (MH)] and scores of subscales were summarized as two summary scores [Physical Component Summary (PCS] and Mental Component Summary (MCS)] (1). The correlation between lifestyle factors and the scores of SF-36 were analyzed, respectively.

The PF score was the highest and the BP score was the lowest among all SF-63 indices of scientific editors. The lower BP score may be derived from vertebral or joint diseases under special working conditions. The absence of a reasonable amount of physical exercise is apparent (2-4). The results indicated that age, gender, marital status, amount of physical exercise, sleep time (h/d), amount of breakfasts eaten per week, punctual meals, amount of overtime, and the amount of office space were risk factors for HRQOL. Interestingly, salary and income are considered vital elements with respect to the level of HRQOL (5). However, no remarkable correlation existed between salary and HRQOL among scientific editors in China. Simultaneously, a positive correlation was noted between the size of an office and HRQOL in the current study.

This result captured a new dimension regarding HRQOL amongst scientific editors. A larger working area is conducive to a better psychological sense of security and increased working efficiency may be related to a larger working place (6). In this investigation many elements were involved in the HRQOL of scientific editors. These data provide a guideline for scientific journal editors and related research. A better HRQOL level of editors is essential to maintaining the quality of science. Besides, more attention should focus on

the physical and mental features of Chinese scientific editors, especially female editors under pressure.

Acknowledgements

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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