

Quality Of Life among General Practitioners in Rural Areas around Chennai- A Cross Sectional Study

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Abstract: Quality of life is an important health assessment tool which can evaluate the living environment and the satisfaction of the individual in their environment. The quality of life of general practitioners suffering from burn out appears significantly increased, that may lead to deleterious consequences on the care provided to their patients. The study was conducted to assess the quality of life of general practitioners in rural areas.

Materials and methods- The study was structured as descriptive cross sectional with 20 pre validated questionnaire conducted among 300 the general practitioners in rural areas around Chennai.

Results: The General Practitioners are suffering from health related issues, their social life is also compromised by spending their time with family and they are not able to fulfill their economic needs from their profession.

Conclusion: The qualities of life of general doctors are in risk in the rural areas. Stress, burnout, dissatisfaction, overloading of work affecting their quality of life in all aspects of health, social and financial fields.

Keywords- Health, quality of life, general practitioners, stress, burn out.

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I. Introduction

World Health Organization defines health as physical, mental and social well-being not merely absence of disease. Quality of life is an important clinical health assessment tool and can be determined by previous experiences, personalities, mental conditions and expectations. It is a concept affected by all life aspects. It measures the feeling evaluate the individual activities like disease, work, economic and social life¹.

SjorenVentegodt et al² considered three areas are important to quality of life, namely subjective well-being, health and welfare. Subjective well-being refers to a person's perception of their life situation. Health can be defined in objective and subjective terms and imply an evaluation of physical and mental status.

Doctors are appeared to be healthier than the general population. But in recent years they are having a stressful life with illness including cardiac, musculoskeletal disorders and psychiatric problems. Research shows that young doctors are suffering from depression, burn out and thoughts of suicide³. The study by CREMESP (State of São Paulo Regional Council of Medicine) states that the doctors had long working hours with unsatisfactory working conditions without adequate pay⁴. These conditions increase stress which negatively affecting quality of life and their family life.

The study was conducted to evaluate the quality of life of general practitioners in rural areas around Chennai.

II. Materials and Methods

The study was structured as descriptive cross sectional with 20 pre validated questionnaire conducted among 300 the general practitioners in a rural area around Chennai during a period of 3 months from June to August 2018. The questionnaire (Proforma- annexure I) focused on general details (1-5) Health related quality of life (HQL- 6-11), Social quality of life (SQL-12-17) and Economical quality of life (EQL-18-20). The data were collected and results were tabulated in percentage.

III. Results

The doctors participated were ranged from 27 to 68 years. They were grouped into four based on age in which males were predominant 75% and females were 25%. Undergraduate doctors occupy (62%) more than half of the population than diploma holders (31%) and postgraduate doctors (7%). Doctors practicing continuously less than 4 hours (76%) with less than 20 patients per session. 23% of doctors were taking break at

every 2 hours, 51% are taking 4-8 hours of break and 26% of the doctors taking break in more than 8 hours in a day.

Health related quality of life (HQL):

In total number of 300 participants, there were 27% doctors having diabetes mellitus, 10% having angina with cardiac related issues and 40% doctors were hypertension. 50% doctors were suffering from back pain and 19% had diagnosed cervical spondylitis or neck pain(Graph -1)

Social related quality of life (SQL):

Only 20% of doctors spent their time with family member, interact with children and visiting their school frequently. Almost 70% spending their time with family were less than 4 hours per day.

Economic related quality of life (EQL):

23% of doctors are satisfied with their income from practice which is fulfilled their needs. 87% doctors rely on their income only by the profession and 77 % were the only earning member of the family(Graph-2).

IV. Discussion

Most of the doctors' respondents were in the age group of 35-45 which is similar to the study conducted by Chen et al ⁵ [16] who reported 75% of their respondents were male and that most were between the age of 30 and 50. The decline in the female group clearly states that their personal and family responsibilities restrict them to continue their professional career.

The doctors practicing in the rural areas are with undergraduate degree. The specialized doctors are in demand.

Health related quality of life (HQL):

In this study the distribution of diabetic among participants is 27%, angina (10%), hypertension (40%) which is similar to Ramachandran et al⁶ studies. The experience of backpain (50%) and cervical spondylitis (19%) are common among the general practitioners which is comparable with the study conducted by Bansal et al ⁷. The percentage of health related issues implies that general practitioners are under burnout syndrome due to continuous clinical practice. Various studies have shown a higher level of stress amongst doctors when compared to the general population^{7,8}. The sources of stress for medical practitioners can be in different forms that involves the workload, time pressure, sleep deprivation, no regular meals. Hence the consequences of these can lead to insomnia, tension, headache, gastrointestinal disturbances, hypertension, fatigue and skeletal disorders. Doctors can themselves reduce the stress by identify the source of stress, proper time management and reduce the overload of strain.

Social related quality of life (SQL):

The social interaction of the doctors with their family and friends like spending time with family, interacting with children, participate in their school activities are also reduced due to work patterning and irrelevant time of practicing⁹. Every family event, birthday, and anniversary has to be adjusted around the work schedule and should give importance in relaxing themselves from the professional duties. Weekends are traditionally seen as family time. These measures should improve their quality of life.

Economic related quality of life (EQL):

In assessing economic aspects of practicing doctors 87% of them are earning their income only by the profession and they are the only earning member in the family. These creates more financial burden to them in spending their time in the clinic. In most hospital they are underpaid and do not have the job security¹⁰. In rural areas due to financial constraint, specialized doctors are relocating their practice to the cities. This creates demand of specialist in the rural areas and work load was increased for the general practitioners.

V. Conclusion

The general practitioners in the rural areas are vulnerable to life style disorders. Their qualities of life in all aspects like health, social and financial are in questionable. Efforts should take to improve their lifestyle by conducting workshops to make them more fit to facilitate them rendering service to humanities. The health authorities should establish new hospitals with advanced infra-structure in all fields of medicines to provide specialty care to the rural population.

Conflicts of interest- Nil

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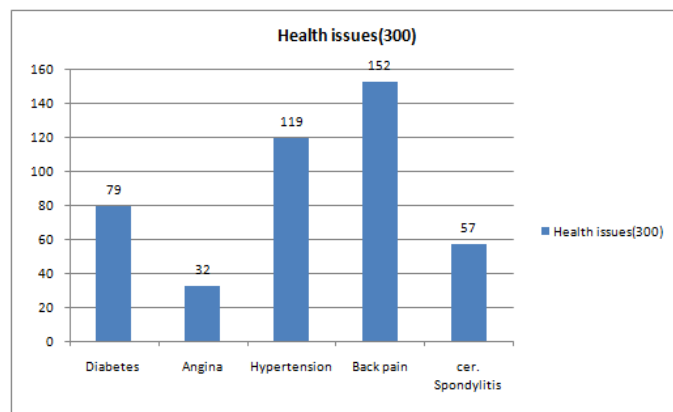
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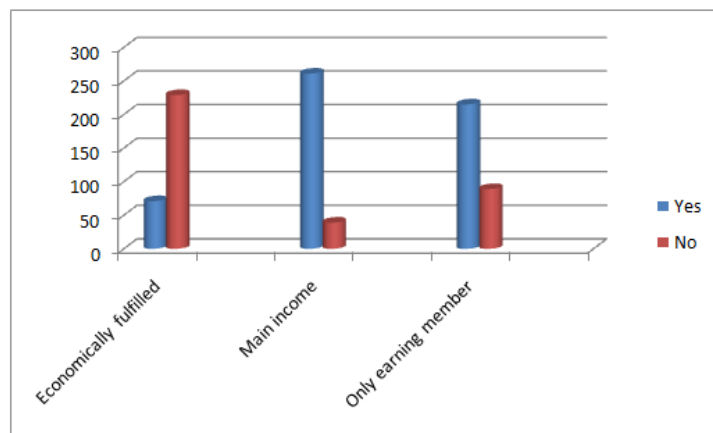
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Graph -1 Health related quality of life



Graph 2- Economical quality of life

**Annexure -1
PROFORMA
(Questionnaire)**

QUALITY OF LIFE ASPECTS AMONG GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

S.No.	Questionnaire	Please Tick or Fill the appropriate options	
1	Age		
2	Gender		
4	Qualification (List all)		
5	Specialty		
6	Do you have any of the following during practice? Neck pain or Cervical spondylitis.	Yes	
		No	
7	Do you have Back pain?	Yes	

		<i>No</i>	
		<i>Yes</i>	
		<i>No</i>	
		Yes	
		No	
		<i>Yes</i>	
		<i>No</i>	
		Less than 4 hours	
		4 hours to 8 hours	
		More than 8 hours	
		5 to 20	
		20 to 40	
		40 and above	
		Every 2 hours	
		Every 4hours	
		No break	
		1 to 2	
		2 to 4	
		4 and above	
		None	
		Every day	
		Every week	
		Every month	
		1	
		2	
		3 and above	
		Never visited	
		Every functions	
		Most of them	
		Rare	
		Daily	
		Once in a week	
		Once in a month	
		Once in 6 month	
		Less than 4 hours	
		4 hours to 8 hours	
		More than 8 hours	
		<i>Yes</i>	
		<i>No</i>	
		YES	
		NO	
		<i>Yes</i>	
		<i>No</i>	

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