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Addictions in a cohort of healthcare workers: prevalence, risk factors and prevention strategies

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Background. Substance-related and behavioral addictions represent an increasing public health concern, with significant implications for individual well-being and healthcare quality. Healthcare workers constitute a particularly vulnerable population due to high emotional burden, prolonged working hours, burnout, and continuous exposure to stressful working conditions. This study aimed to assess the prevalence of addictive behaviors among healthcare professionals and to identify the main associated risk factors.

Materials And Methods. An observational study was conducted on a cohort of healthcare workers to evaluate the prevalence of major addictive behaviors, including alcohol and tobacco consumption, gambling, and problematic social media use. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and validated assessment tools to investigate individual, occupational, and environmental risk factors associated with addictive behaviors.

Results. The findings revealed the presence of several risk behaviors and compensatory coping strategies related to occupational stress, despite the absence of high rates of clinically established addiction. The main factors associated with addictive behaviors included excessive workload, night shifts, psychological distress, and inadequate organizational support. These conditions were associated with a potential reduction in professional performance, an increased risk of healthcare-related errors, and deterioration in the psychological and physical well-being of healthcare workers.

Conclusions. The results highlight the need to implement structured preventive strategies based on psychological support, resilience promotion, and organizational interventions aimed at reducing work-related stress. Protecting healthcare workers' health represents a fundamental requirement for ensuring patient safety and maintaining high standards of healthcare quality.

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