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Career Development in Dental Education



In collaboration with

PHYSICAL FITNESS AMONGST DENTAL STUDENTS

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Aims: Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WRMSDs) are associated with multi-factorial risks (physical, psychosocial, work-organizational and socio-cultural) as the types and levels of risks vary according to individual traits and occupational demands. The best established risk factors for WRMSDs are reported to be: awkward and prolonged posture, bending and twisting, vibration and repetitive forces. Musculoskeletal disorders comorbidity amongst dentists is obviously higher than in the average population. Physical exercise, for its ability to improve musculoskeletal and cardiovascular function, may be useful for improving back function and preventing development of work-related musculoskeletal disorders. Proper et al. (2002) showed that the effectiveness of physical activity programmes in the workplace is limited. It may suggest that ergonomic advice of improving physical activity should be offered earlier in life, before the individual begins working career or during education. The aim of this study was to analyze health-related behaviour and total physical fitness amongst freshman dental students.

Materials and Methods: A total of 90 freshman dental students filled anonymous questionnaire designed for this study. Fifty voluntarily participated in the Åstrand cycle ergometer test to assess the objective evaluation of participant's physical fitness. The study was approved by The Ethical committee of Dental School University of Zagreb, Croatia. All participants signed their written informed consent.

Results: Amongst freshman dental students 75% of them had fairly healthy behaviours, normal BMI and exercising regularly but not effectively. The Åstrand cycle ergometer test revealed that subjects' physical fitness was lower than they thought it was. Subjects who had more regularly exercised had significantly less low back pain.

Conclusions: A programme that includes ergonomic advice for dentistry may contain promotion of healthy physical behaviours, encouraging already existing physical fitness habits amongst dental students.