

Chapter 18

The Impact of the Attitude of Medical Staff From Burnout on the Level of Ongoing Medical Services

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes how contemporary, dynamic development in all available human areas is unavoidable and necessary. However, along with the benefits and progress made by civilization, there is also a growing margin of vulnerability and unfavorable price developments. Professional burnout is becoming a global problem. It identifies the limits of current human capabilities to the serious phenomenon. In particular, nurses and medical rescuers, who are in direct contact with the patient, experience unpleasant symptoms of burnout.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of burnout is a very trendy, popular and widely used term. Basically, the term can be seen as the mark of the modern times. Although originally, we have been in contact with this phenomenon (not yet a concept) in the story of Graham Greene, *A Burn-Out Case*. That is where the author presents the main character who openly demonstrates his “overall fatigue”. Despite his professional fame, financial and, you would think, social comfort he is definitely forced to declare that he has had enough. His psychosocial fatigue has brought him to a situation where he reevaluates his life and views. The decision of social alienation and living deep in a bush, away from the civilization echoes is not as much an escape as a way of saving his being, the wreckage of his suffocated *ego*. Later, as a result of the carried out analysis and research, psychology would call that way of dealing with stress a reset, which restores an emotional balance. In the literature that was the first case of such an immeasurable revealing of a burnout symptom (Schaufeli, Enzman, 1998).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-9161-1.ch018

The emergence of the sole concept of burnout is not an artificial stimulation. That term rather constitutes the outcome of a spontaneous, but evolving problem of specific occupational groups. In principle, it should be assumed that used for years ordinary term or a metaphor has been an anchor to bring attention to the existing internal problem of escalation of the professional life on a human being as the biopsychosocial entity. Something what for years has been existing as a jargon of specific professional environments has become the subject of scientific researches (Smith, 2007). Initially, psychology considered that concept as very detached and not quite serious, not having enough essential foundations to undertake any detailed analysis. Basically, the problem of inability to deal with professional aspect of life and a very wide influence of its debilitating effects on many other areas of human life have forced contemporary psychology to look into the problem of burnout (Anczewska, Edwards, Roszczyńska, 2005). It has been a quite bumpy road to achieve the scientific psychology acceptance of the fact of the burnout phenomenon. Substantially, that was partially caused by the “victims” themselves. That would be embarrassing for stockbrokers or lawyers to shout out loud their tiredness and fatigue. Such behavior could have a negative influence on their professionalism and might significantly diminish the rank of their position. Moreover, even nowadays such a recognition of human frailties is considered to be inappropriate and socially denuding or unacceptable in certain professional groups (Maslach, 2001).

Whereas the first reliable descriptions and analysis of the stress effects and the use of the concept of burnout appear in the second half of the 20th century. They were concurrently, but independently of each other introduced to the scientific terminology by a psychiatrist Herbert Freudenberger and social psychologist Christina Maslach in America in the early 1970s. First time, Burnout Syndrome was described by Freudenberger in 1974. While he was working with juvenile drug addicts at New York facility with a group of committed and idealistic volunteers recruited from young Americans, he observed gradual loss of their charisma, motivation and charity commitment leading to the presence of many psychosomatic symptoms. Such a very dynamic and strong dedication to work for the entire year within that specific environment led them to apparent exhaustion, which he called a “burnout”. This term was commonly (but highly accurately) used there to describe functioning of people who have been addicted for a long time (Freudenberger, 1983).

Maslach has explored the phenomenon of burnout in slightly different way. While working together with her colleagues from the University of Berkeley and conducting extensive research among working in stressful occupations people (including social workers, psychiatric nurses, lawyers providing legal advice and assistance to the poor, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, prisons’ employees), she tried to determine how they deal with their work related emotional tension. She was interested in the types of techniques they were using to successfully distance themselves from their clients’ or patients’ problems, and what were the personal and social consequences of applying those techniques (Maslach, 1993). Collected data revealed that many people – by analyzing their own professional experience – reported their emotional exhaustion and weakened feelings, increase of negative perception and patient misconduct and, as a result of those emotional tensions, apparent signs of professional competence crisis. Many of them suggested the reduction or gradual loss of empathy towards others. During the presentation of the study outcomes one of the lawyers has called this specific phenomenon a “burnout”. The term has been picked up by other participants, and then – not without the mentioned above obstacles – introduced to the psychological literature (Maslach, Schaufeli, 1993).

Today, the burnout occurs commonly in modern organizations, although most often is not considered to be an organizational problem at the workplace. Common thinking about the professional burnout is focused on employee and his weaknesses related to dealing with his psychological difficulties. Whereas,

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