

**A PROFILE ON ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AMONG SOUTH AFRICAN
DENTISTS – A DENTIST’S PERSPECTIVE**

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I declare that this thesis / dissertation is my own original work. Where secondary material is used, this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with university requirements.

I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of university policy in this regard.

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21 October 2008
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Abstract

A profile on alcohol consumption among South African dentists – A dentist's perspective: JH Olivier

Background

This study investigated alcohol use linked to the stress of a selected sample of South African dentists. The only other related topic in South Africa, that the researcher could find, was done in 1996 at the University of Stellenbosch. The literature suggests that prevalence studies of substance use and abuse rarely include dentists.

Methods

A dominant quantitative approach with a less dominant qualitative approach was utilized. The quantitative-descriptive design (survey with a questionnaire) was used to obtain data with regard to biographical/background information, stress and coping, quantity and frequency of alcohol use, and dysfunction as a result of alcohol use among a randomly selected sample of 110 South African dentists with a response rate of 70%. The respondents' perspective on alcohol use linked to the stress of the dental profession with recommendations were also obtained.

For the qualitative data collection, the researcher utilized the collective case study. He planned semi-structured interviews with an interview schedule with five dentists that have already had treatment for alcohol abuse or were self-characterized as problem drinkers. Unfortunately, two of the respondents who characterized themselves as heavy alcohol users died before they could be interviewed. Because of ethical reasons and the sensitivity of the topic they could not be replaced.

Findings

The quantitative study indicated that: (1) the respondents experienced significant amounts of occupational stress (2) the majority of the respondents do physical exercise to reduce their stress (3) a great number of respondents socialize with friends to reduce their stress (4) some respondents actually use alcohol to reduce their stress (5) stress levels of the respondents in private practice and stress levels of the respondents in other sectors are the same (6) alcohol consumption of male and female dentists is the same (7) respondents who reported less areas of stress consumed more alcohol than those who reported more areas of stress (8) a great number of the respondents experience high stress levels but do not use alcohol, or they only use alcohol to socialize (9) less than 3% of the respondents reported that alcohol use has affected their work as a dentist (10) the majority of the respondents believe that some dentists consume alcohol as a coping mechanism concerning social anxiety, occupational stress and personal factors.

The qualitative study indicated that: (1) the habit of alcohol use that may lead to alcohol dependency starts at university (2) the respondents, who had treatment for alcohol dependency, experienced high levels of occupational stress (3) the respondents link their dependency directly to the stress and strain of their profession.

Conclusions

There are more intense and less intense stressors among South African dentists and there are some dentists that consume alcohol to relieve the stress and strain of their profession. However, the majority only use alcohol as a way of socializing. Less than 3% of the respondents reported that alcohol use has affected their work as a dentist.



Recommendations

Modules on coping mechanisms linked to the stress and strain of the dental profession should be included in the curricula at dental schools.

The compulsory CPD programme of the HPCSA should include stress management and healthy coping mechanism courses.

Key words:

Dentists

Occupational stress

Alcohol consumption

Quantitative approach

Qualitative approach

Survey

Case study

Social anxiety

Personal factors

Stress management.



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