

PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT SYNDROME

Maria, a medical student, defines burnout as a professional exhaustion syndrome manifested by symptoms similar to depression and caused by stress accumulation during professional life. We speak of burnout in case of chronic stress, which means continuous stress over a long period of time.

In France, her colleague says, this problem was acknowledged in the 2000s, while in the Nordic states the discussion dates back to the '90s and even the '70s (e.g. Denmark). Economic reasons prevent those in power from taking action because placing burnout among occupational diseases would increase labour costs.

Burnout is an affliction of our time and of economically developed countries. In the medical environment, burnout is caused by high levels of responsibility, time management related stresses, overwhelming workload, night shifts, patient's ingratitude and their verbal or even non-verbal aggression (which is very visible in France).

Burnout can be prevented by limiting work hours, employing additional medical staff, not letting consultation times be decided by clerks, providing modern medical equipment.

Abbasia adds to the debate: "I have been to Japan, the birthplace of burnout. The work pace is mad. The Japanese only get 15 days off a year and the work day is 9-10 hours long. They work like dehumanized robots. They have no time for feelings, which is why the numbers of suicides (due to fear of professional failure) is very high. The state seeks to improve the quality of life for the Japanese by improving work conditions. Even if 50% of them suffer from burnout, the Japanese are still role models of professional success."

Topics for Forum:

- ! Have you ever met people suffering from burnout? If so, what symptoms did you find unsettling?
- ! Have you yourself experiences such long periods of being overworked?
- ! How could we avoid burnout in ways that are practical and accessible for all?
- ! Is burnout a visible phenomenon in your culture?
- ! What is your government doing to deal with this phenomenon?