

OCCUPATIONAL RISK ASSESSEMENT AND HEALTH MONITORING AMONG VETERINARY DOCTORS

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Background and Aims : The veterinary profession is regarded as a high-risk group for occupational hazards, the most important being the infectious risk (risk of contracting zoonosis).

Methods : A cross-sectional study was carried out among 59 veterinary doctors employed in a veterinary department from Transylvania. A special individual medical questionnaire was individually applied, regarding occupational history, actual and past animal exposure, chemical exposure, work-related health problems, chronic diseases. Clinical examination and blood pressure measurement were performed. Lung function tests, hematological and biochemical tests among laboratory staff were performed.

Results : This professional group is exposed mainly to biological hazards (bacteria, viruses, parasites, mycosis, protozoa), animal allergens and risk of trauma associated with animal contact during occupational activity. Chemical risk exposure was present to the laboratory staff, mainly to volatile organic compounds and respiratory irritants. The results of questionnaire analysis and medical documents have showed that previous diseases and/or accidents related to animal exposure were reported, more frequent among subjects over 10 years of activity. A few cases of rabies contact were reported every year. Allergic diseases due to animals allergens were also reported. The most frequent chronic diseases registered were musculoskeletal disorders (work-related to cold exposure, repetitive musculoskeletal injuries), high blood pressure, ischemic heart disease, obesity and diabetes. Laboratory staff complains of work-related irritative respiratory syndrome in a few cases. Unfortunately in the past these diseases and/or accidents were not registered as occupational diseases or work-related diseases in most cases.

Conclusions : Veterinary doctors are exposed to a multitude of occupational risk factors and they experience a lot of health problems related to their professional activity. A specific methodology for risk assessment and health monitoring for this professional category is necessary to be elaborate and applied.