Background: Medical laboratory is a place where a number of specimens are collected and analyzed. A heavy workload to the laboratory workers can be expected. However, there is no previous report on the incidence of psychological stress of the laboratory workers in Thailand.

Objective: To assess the incidence of psychological stress of the laboratory workers

Design: descriptive study

Setting: Department of Laboratory Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University

Method: Here, the author assessed the incidence of psychological stress of the phlebotomists in the venepuncture clinic in a tertiary hospital by reviewing of the unit record and incidence report.

Results: According to the reviewing, there are 9 incidents of 3 phlebotomists visiting to the psychiatrists (3 visits for each phlebotomist). All cases posed the psychological stress and presented rude behaviors as impolite speaking. In this study, 3 of 18 workers experience the stress giving the incidence rate equal to 17 %.

Discussion: The author hereby suggests for a concern on the mind of the laboratory workers. Also, program for relieving stress for the workers should be set.

Keywords: laboratory worker, stress
Introduction

Medical laboratory is a place where a number of specimens are collected and analyzed. A heavy workload to the laboratory workers can be expected. According to a recent study of Charuruks et al, the ratio of the average number of samples or tests that were calculated from the instruments and the average service number of samples or tests for chemistry and CBC were 2.13, 3.41, 5.24 and 2.33, 2.76, 3.71 in university and affiliated hospital laboratories, government hospital laboratories, and the private hospital laboratories, respectively. According to another recent study to demonstrate the dimensional view by Wiwanitkit, the rate of workplace to medical personal was about 3 square meter/personnel. These facts can reflect the high workload on the laboratory personnel.

Job-related depression in laboratory technicians in hospital can be expected. Aziah et al said that a high proportion of laboratory technicians experienced high job strain and psychosocial factors in the workplace posed significant risks of job strain in these workers. Here, the author assessed the incidence of psychological stress of the phlebotomists in the venepuncture clinic in a tertiary hospital.

Materials and Methods

This study was designed as a retrospective study. The author reviewed the unit record of the venepuncture clinic unit of Division of Laboratory Medicine, King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital during year 2004. The unit record is the record in the daily report book of the in-charge nurse of the venepuncture unit. Also, the incidence report of the unit of the Division of Laboratory Medicine in the same year was also reviewed. All of the records are under the laboratory quality system of the Division of Laboratory Medicine, ISO 15189. The author summarized the incidence of phlebotomists visiting to the psychiatrists.

Results

According to the reviewing, there are 9 incidences of 3 phlebotomists visiting to the psychiatrists (3 visits for each phlebotomist). All cases were female and aged between 40 - 50 years old and have no additional jobs. All cases posed the psychological stress and presented rude behaviors as impolite speaking to the other medical personnel in the laboratory. No case was reported in the patient’s complaint form. However, no case was finally definitely diagnosed for specific psychological disorder. All cases returned normal and presented no rude behavior after visiting to the psychiatrists.

Discussion

In the developing countries, there is a great shortage of manpower, equipment, chemicals and other supplies to provide adequate laboratory services in the health centers within the region. Several sources of laboratory job stress exist. Some of these stressors are intrinsic to the job, while some are related to psychosocial and other factors. Aziah et al concluded that low social support positively predicted depression in laboratory technicians in hospitals. In addition, high psychological demands as well as low decision authority also significantly predicted depression in laboratory technicians.

At present the quality system bases on the patient focus is the heart of the laboratory service. However, the laboratory personnel are sometimes overlooked. Indeed, self-reported job demands, latitude, and job strain were associated with some cardiovascular-related health characteristics, but the effects were not similar in magnitude or direction for all characteristics and they varied by sex. For laboratory personnel there are a few studies on their stress. Few reports on medical laboratory workers can be seen. Of interest, there is no study on the stress of laboratory workers in Thailand. Here, the author tries to summarize the incidence of severe psychological stress of the laboratory workers in a venepuncture clinic. Each incidence is concerned problematic and the consultation to psychologists was performed.

According to this study, 3 of 18 workers experience the stress giving the incidence rate equal to 17 %. This rate is lower than that of the previous report in Malaysia (about 33 %). However, this study is a retrospective review and did not perform an in-depth analysis for the actual factor bringing the stress to each case. There is no definite criteria in this study to discriminate the stress generated from venipuncture work load and other causes such as family and additional jobs. In addition to work stress, the cause of impolite manner might be due to the family background. The author hereby suggests for a concern on the mind of the laboratory workers. Also, program for relieving stress for the workers should be set.
References


