Introduction

Workaholism, an addiction to work, is a pathology which has been recognised since the 1970s. It is generally found in around 10% of workers, yet one study on doctors working in a hospital environment demonstrated that 30% suffered from the condition. This study’s objective is to evaluate the prevalence of workaholism among doctors in a university teaching hospital, and to analyse the links to working conditions and the imbalance between effort and reward.

Methodology

Cross-sectional survey of doctors in a university teaching hospital, using an anonymous online questionnaire via Sphinx Online© software. The questionnaire consisted of general questions, specific questions on psychoactive substances (tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and others), Siegrist’s effort-reward imbalance questionnaire and the Work Addiction Risk Tests (WART) questionnaire. Results were analysed using Excel© and Biostat©.

Results

There were 162 participants, a rate of 30% of relevant personnel. The principal psychoactive substance used by participants was alcohol: 81.3% of subjects reported consuming it. An effort-reward imbalance was present in 18% of subjects who participated in the study. The risk of workaholism was identified in 48% of the cohort: 17% were high risk and 31% medium risk. There was a link between workaholism and effort-reward imbalance (p<0.001).

Conclusion

The frequency of workaholism among doctors is much higher than the general population. From this study the link with work-related stress may help direct primary prevention efforts for this condition.

Introduction

The Job Demands-Resources model predicts the direct and interaction effects of a wide range of job characteristics on employee well-being, but has hardly been used to predict work-related alcohol consumption and drug use. Based on this model, we expect that job demands increase the use of alcohol and drugs, whereas job resources are negatively related to the consumption. Furthermore, we hypothesise that job resources buffer the negative relationship between job demands and alcohol and drug use.

Methods

Data were collected among employees in elementary and secondary schools in Belgium, using an online questionnaire (n=9,790; response of 51.0%). Scientifically validated scales were used to measure qualitative job insecurity, work pressure, cognitive demands, social support, learning opportunities, task autonomy, alcohol consumption and drug use. The hypotheses were examined using hierarchical regression analysis in SPSS.

Result

92.5% of the participants were categorised as ‘low risk’ of problems related to alcohol consumption, 6.9% as ‘medium risk’ and 0.6% as ‘high risk’. Furthermore, 93.3% were categorised as ‘no problems’ related to drug use, 6.1% as ‘low level’, 0.5% as ‘moderate level’, and 0.1% as ‘substantial level’. Qualitative job insecurity was positively related to alcohol consumption (β=0.07; p<0.001) and drug abuse (β=0.05; p<0.01). Learning opportunities were negatively related to alcohol consumption (β=-0.06; p<0.01). Unexpectedly, task autonomy was positively related to alcohol consumption (β=0.04; p<0.03). The other direct relationships as well as the interaction effects were not significant.

Discussion

This study shows that qualitative job insecurity is an important determinant of employee alcohol and drug use. Furthermore, learning opportunities (negatively related) and task autonomy (positively related) may relate to alcohol consumption. Our findings will be discussed in light of their theoretical and practical contributions.