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Various aspects of the doctor's quality of life

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Abstract

Nowadays, more and more attention is paid to the quality of life. Both private and work-related. More and more actions are taken to improve the quality of life in order to reduce the phenomenon of professional burnout. This significantly improves work efficiency and allows employees to work longer.

It is no different in medical professions, including doctors. Fortunately, there is more and more scientific research on this topic.

This allowed us to write an illustrative article about various aspects of the doctor's quality of life. The article will provide information about what quality of life really is and how it is

defined. We will present the impact of various factors influencing this, such as length of work, sleep time, age, shift work and work at irregular intervals.

We will also show how occupational factors influence health, which translates quite well into life expectancy. It is surprising that doctors have higher than expected risk factors for cardiovascular diseases such as hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, body mass. The cause is usually high stress and lack of time for physical activities after work. Specialization is also important when it comes to life expectancy. Charts with this information about expected age will be presented along with discussion in the text.

We hope that in the future there will be further research expanding knowledge on this very important topic. And employers will have developed appropriate standards to improve the quality of life among their employees.

Keywords: Quality of Life, Life Expectancy, Professional Burnout, Cardiovascular Disease, Mental Health

Introduction

The profession of a doctor is stereotypically perceived in society as prestigious and associated with success. On the other hand, at the same time, the image of a doctor is shown as a tired person, devoting himself to others, who does not find time for his own pleasures. The issue of quality of life is currently becoming more and more popular due to the spread of these standards in the context of work-life balance. Also in the context of doctors, more and more articles and studies are appearing. In our illustrative article, we will try to present selected aspects related to the quality of life of doctors. We will present how work-related factors may increase the risk of fatigue and burnout and what factors protect against them. We will also show what life expectancy looks like in the context of various medical specializations.

Quality of Life

WHO defines Quality of Life as an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns.¹⁻⁴

According to another definition, it is an overall general well-being that comprises objective descriptors and subjective evaluations of physical, material, social, and emotional well-being together with the extent of personal development and purposeful activity, all weighted by a personal set of values.⁵

The most frequently mentioned factors taken into account in questionnaires examining the quality of life are: human needs, subjective well-being, expectations, phenomenological viewpoints, preference satisfaction, hedonism, flourishing, life satisfaction, goals, expectations, standards and concerns.⁶⁻⁹

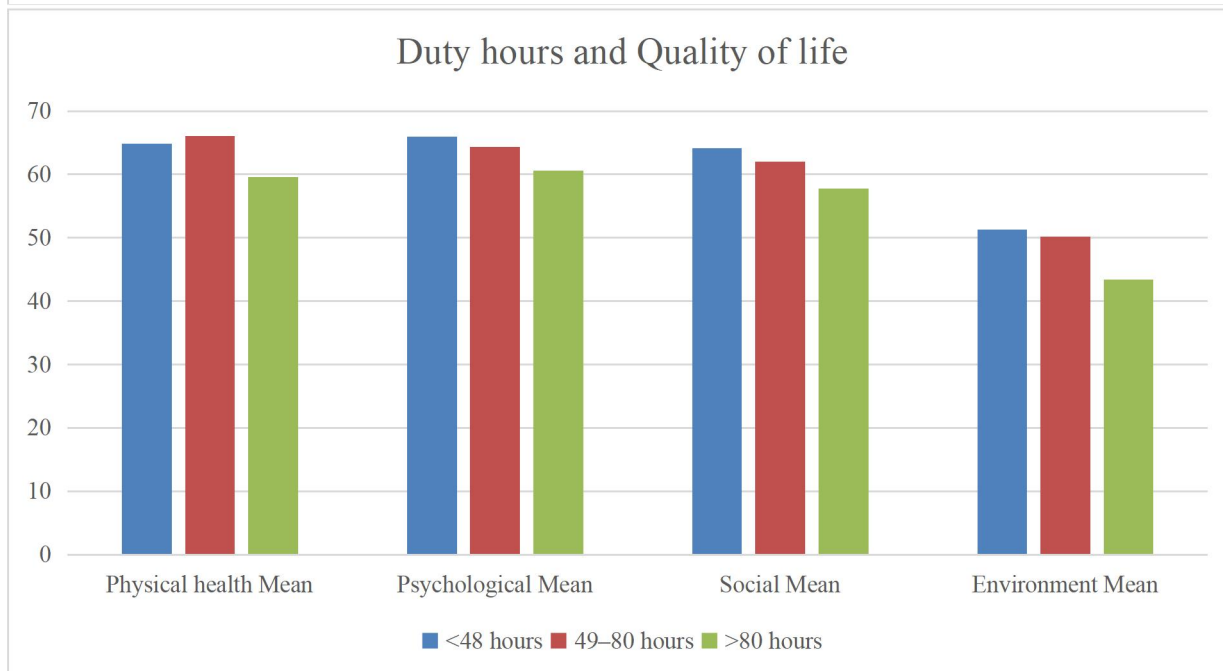
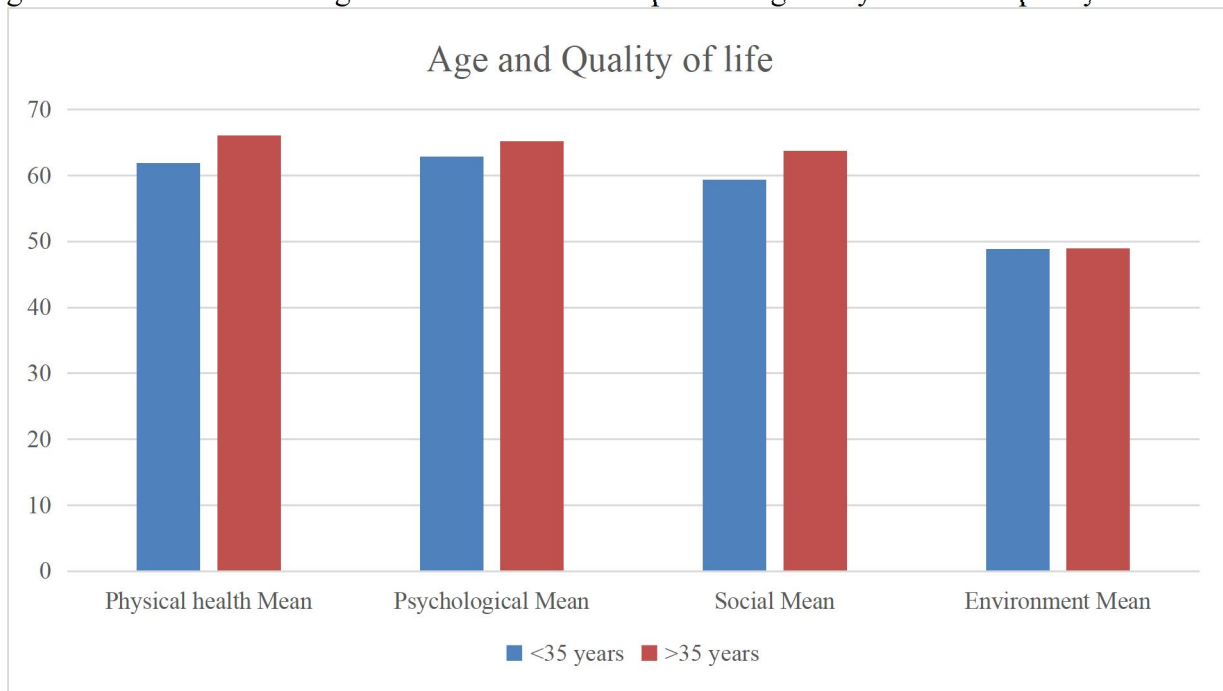
Length of work

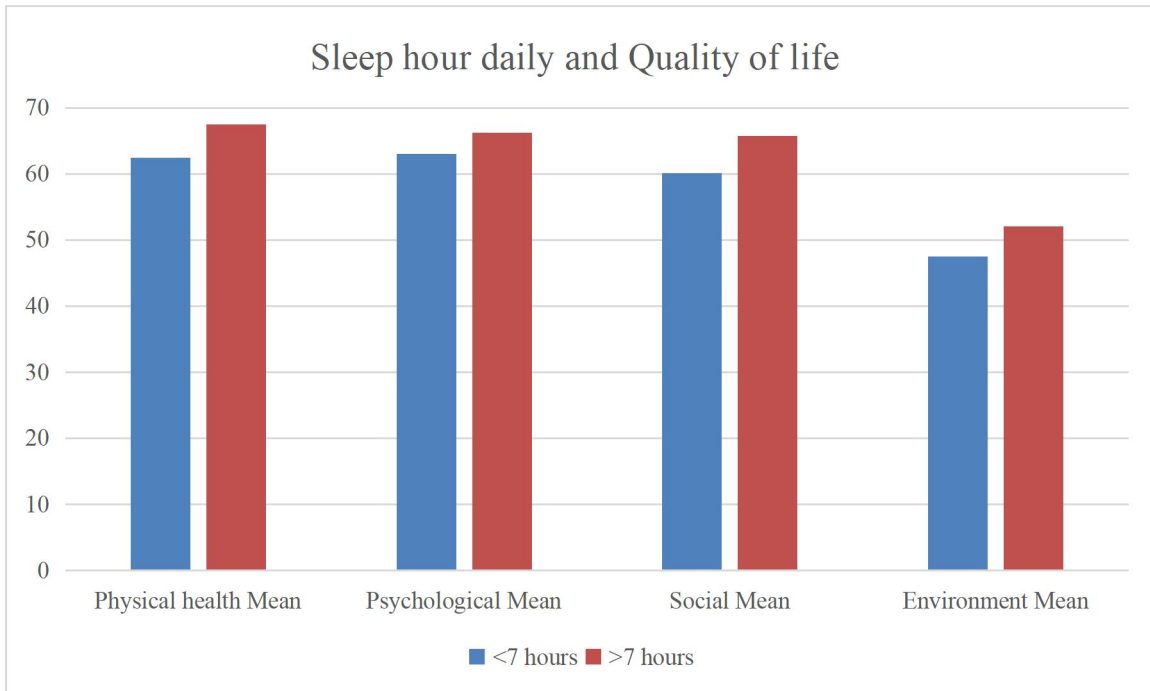
Most articles agree that a lot of working hours can be one of the factors that reduce the quality of life. The reasons include increased fatigue, inadequate sleep, reduced social contacts, and

neglect of family responsibilities. This has a greater impact on young doctors who are starting their professional lives because they do not have developed defense mechanisms.¹⁰⁻¹³ It is postulated that shortening this time will improve the quality of life.¹⁴

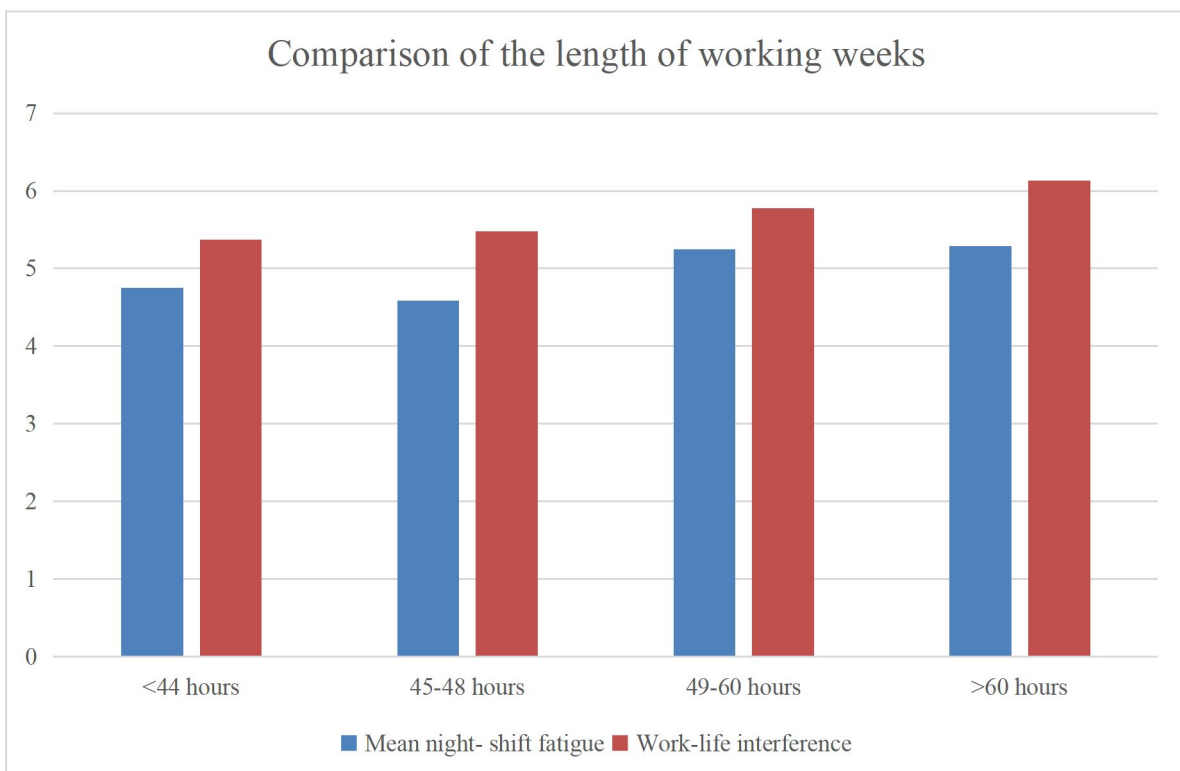
In, it is also important when this work is performed. Unfavorable factors include shift work, work on weekends, and irregular working hours. This also affects families, increasing the risk of separation and divorce.¹⁵⁻¹⁹

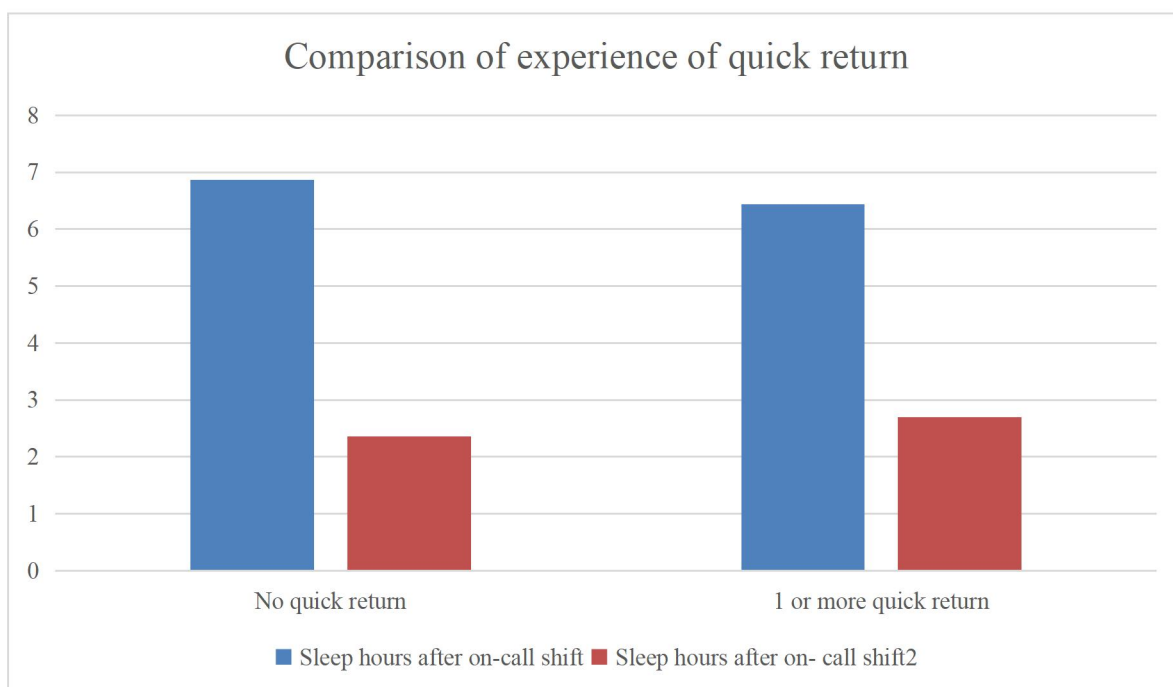
A Nigerian study Oluwaseyi Ogunsuji et al examined the association between early career doctors duty hours and their quality of life (QoL). The quality of life was checked in four areas: Physical health Mean, Psychological Mean, Social Mean, and Environment Mean. The collected data indicate that the older the doctor's age, the better the quality of life. In turn, a greater number of working hours and reduced sleep time negatively affect the quality of life.²⁰





The article by Philip Tucker et al examined the impact of various work-related parameters on the quality of life. The survey results show that the number of hours worked per week affects the feeling of fatigue during the night shift and work-life interference. The biggest differences were observed between those working less than 48 hours a week and those working more. Respondents also reported greater fatigue if the break was shorter than 10 hours (quick returns) between the end of one shift and the start of the next. The study also found that disruption to work life was less among those who worked 3 or 4 nights than among those who worked 7 nights in a row.¹⁰

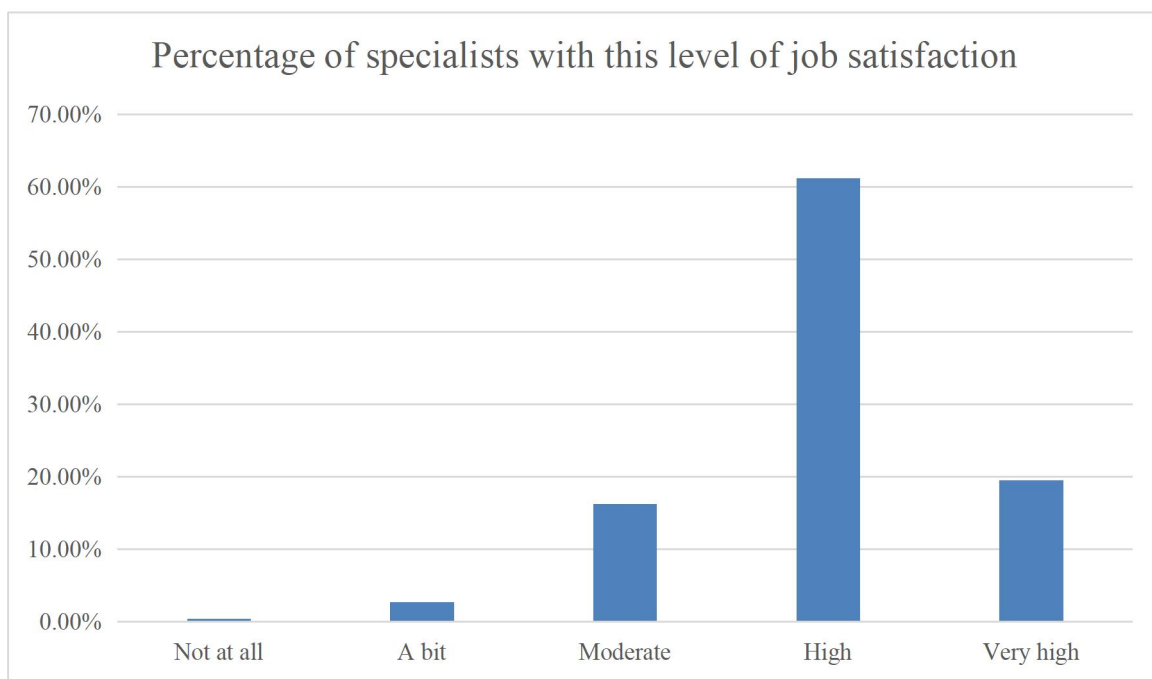
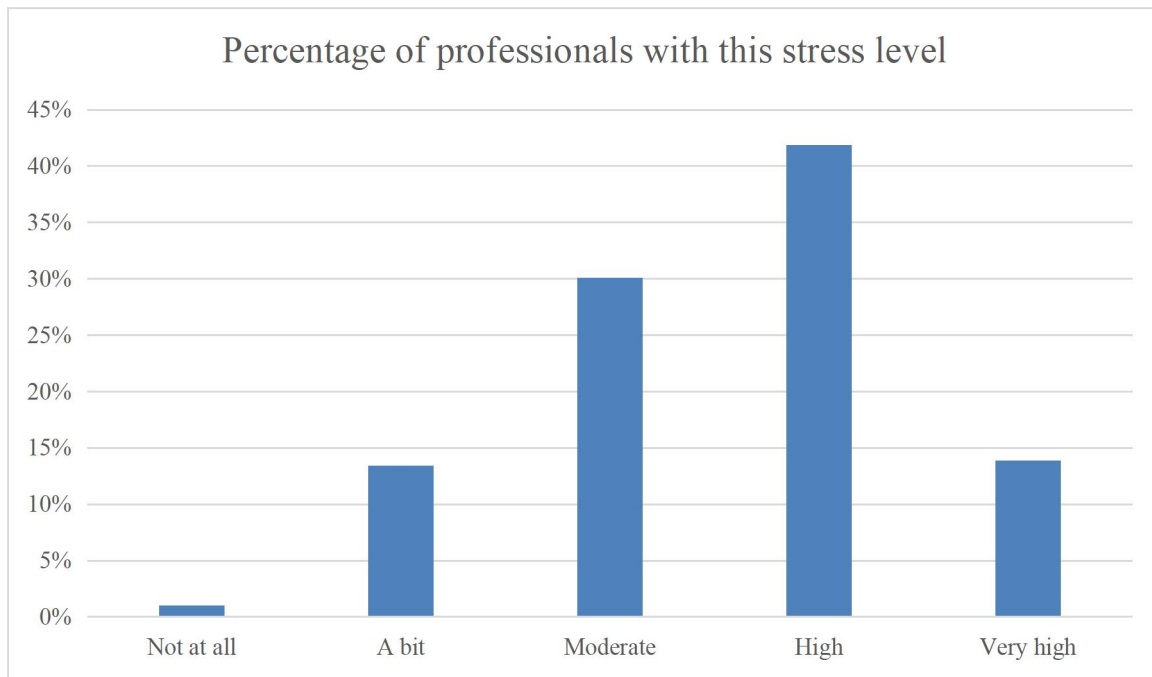




Life expectancy

Health status influences life expectancy. Factors such as insufficient sleep, working irregular hours, and lack of physical activity increase the likelihood of developing cardiovascular diseases. Research indicates that risk factors such as hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, diabetes mellitus, overweight are much higher than would be expected in the context of people who know what health risks it involves and that they should set an example for their patients.²¹⁻²⁹

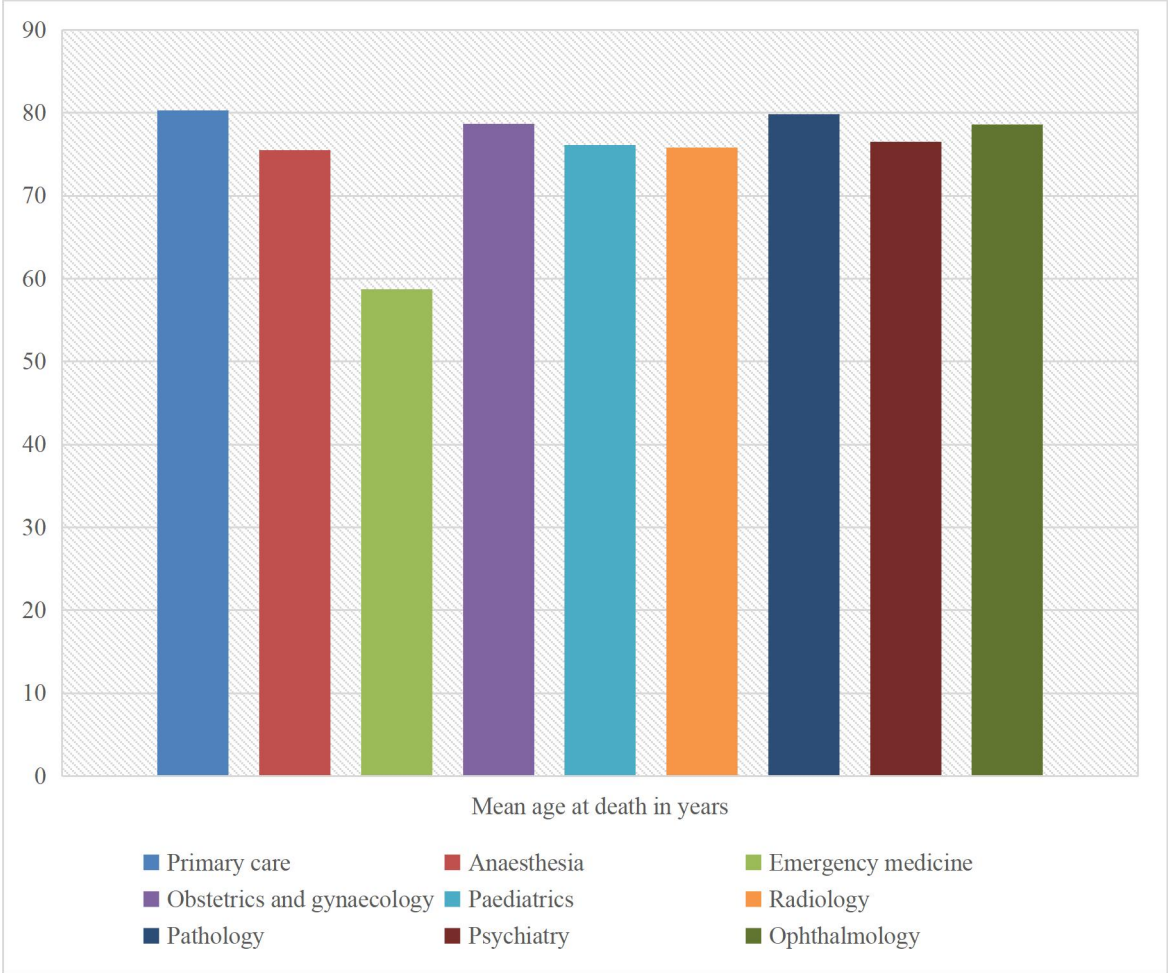
The work of a doctor is associated with significant stress, which can significantly affect both physical and mental health. This problem was examined by researchers Mechteld R.M. Visser et al. They checked stress, satisfaction and burnout among Dutch medical specialists. The majority of respondents reported high or very high levels of stress, whereas the majority also reported high or very high job satisfaction. Moreover, stress and satisfaction were inversely related. Both of these factors are related to the phenomenon of burnout. Another conclusion drawn by the researchers from this study is that the organization of the workplace is more important than personal factors in the context of burnout prevention.³⁰



The quality of life is also influenced by problems with the skeletal system. In the work of a doctor, it is often required to maintain the same position for many hours, both sitting in clinics and standing, for example, in operating rooms..³¹⁻³⁷ In the PAUL MEIJSEN et al study among surgeons the most frequently reported pain was neck/shoulder pain (53%), followed by headache (48%), pain in the legs/feet (43%), pain in the knees (22%), pain in the arms/hands (14%)³²

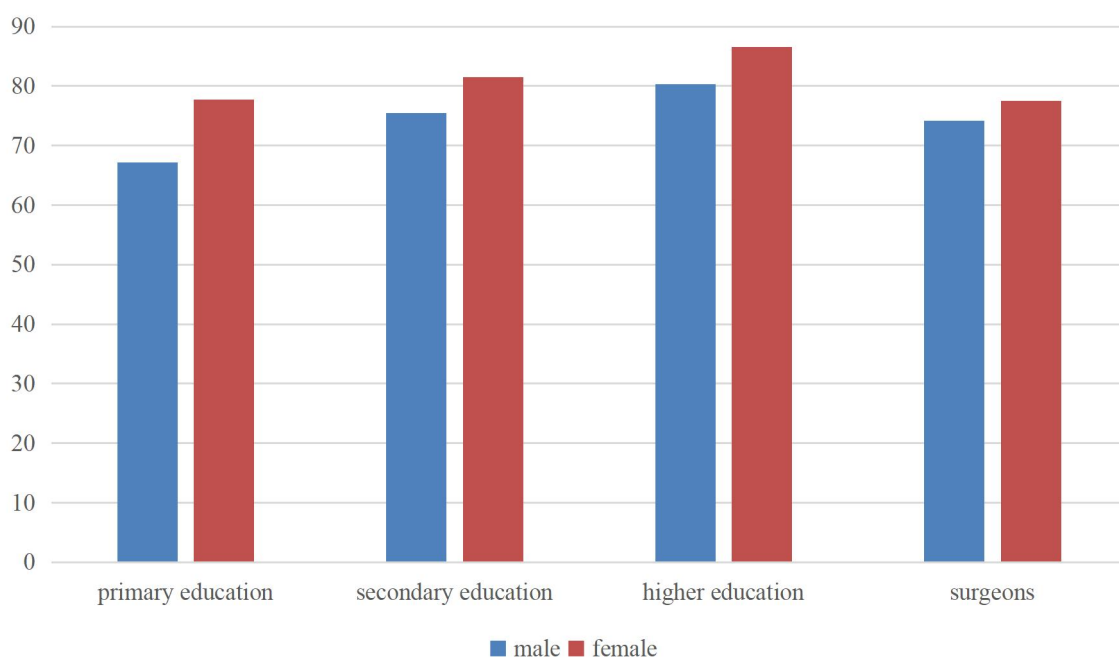
In the Study Adam B. Brayne and all publicly available electronic records (obituaries published in the British Medical Journal between January 1997 and August 2019) were obtained by web scraping. After the analysis, it was noticed that the type of medical specialty has a significant impact on life expectancy. Emergency physicians lived the shortest, while general practitioners lived the longest. Moreover, unlike the general population, whose most

common cause of death was cardiovascular disease, doctors most often died of cancer. Another observation was that doctors live longer than the general population.³⁸

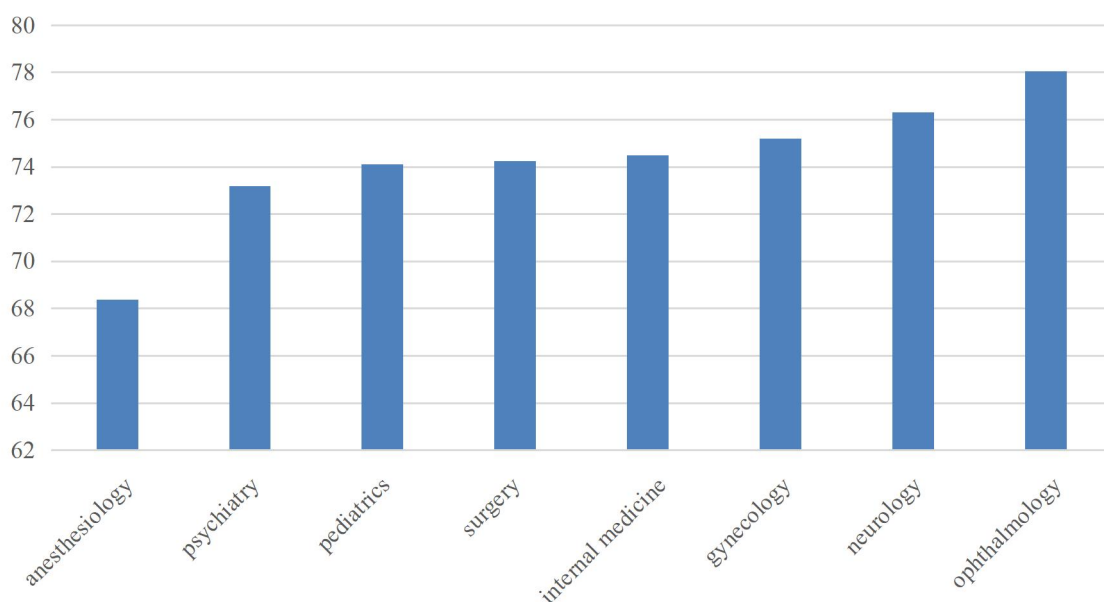


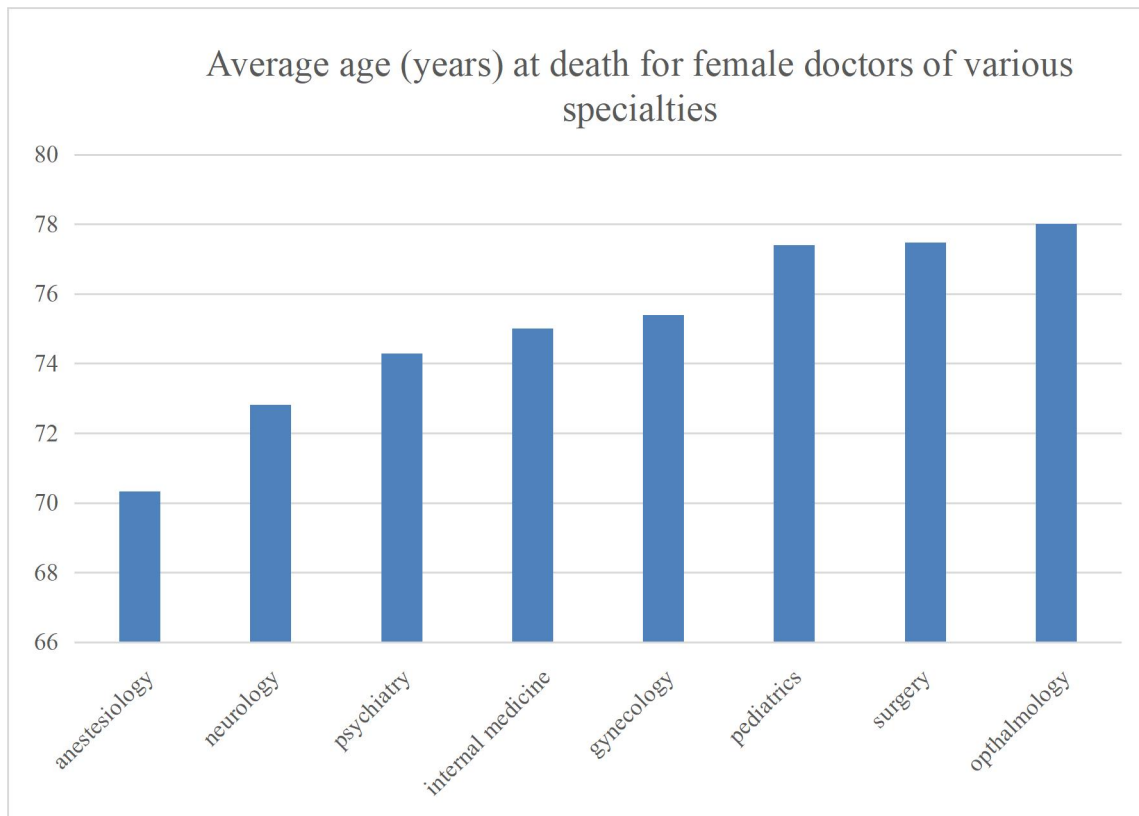
In Poland, individual medical organization conduct an analysis of deaths to determine whether doctors die earlier and what it looks like among different specialties.³⁹ The article by Kryspin Mitura et al mainly analyzed the problem of shorter lifespan of surgeons compared to other representatives of medical specialties in Poland. The collected data show that surgeons live much shorter than the average life expectancy of both women and men with higher education. Interestingly, the life expectancy of female and male surgeons is much closer to each other than in the general population between women and men.⁴⁰⁻⁴² This is explained, among other things, by the fact that the medical profession is one of the most stressful in Poland.⁴³ However, in the case of women, the problem may be even more difficult motherhood, which may affect the psyche.

Expected average total life expectancy (years) of men and women aged 25 depending on the level of education in Poland compared to the average life expectancy of the analyzed population of male and female surgeon



Average age (years) at death for male doctors of various specialties





Summary

We hope that the presented article shed new light on the issue of the quality of life of doctors. This is a professional group on whose actions the health and life of other people depend. Unfortunately, too little attention is paid to the problem of burnout, which affects the quality of health services provided. We believe that appropriate work standards will be developed and implemented in the future to ensure that the quality of life of doctors is as high as possible. This will allow for more effective work, and the image of a tired doctor will become a thing of the past.

Disclosure

Author's contribution:

Planning and Designing: Justyna Składanek

Writing and Editing: Michał Leśkiewicz

Data Analysis: Barbara Kopczyńska

Scientific Verification Joanna Cieszkowska

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