CORRELATION BETWEEN BEHAVIORAL FACTORS, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF MEDICAL STUDENTS

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Young adults suffer from high educational load when studying at the medical university. University training proceeds under the dynamically changing conditions. Psychological discomfort, low physical activity, noncompliance with the principles of rational nutrition, harmful habits can negatively affect both students' physical health and their academic performance. The review of scientific papers published in the international and Russian databases, eLibrary, PubMed, Cyberleninka, in 2019–2024 is provided. Analysis of the papers will allow us to choose the best health preservation practices. Information about the correlation between behavioral factors, academic performance and health of medical students is essential for prevention programming. The development of exercises considering personal preferences in physical activity can positively affect academic performance, reduce psycho-emotional discomfort, thereby reducing the risk of professional burnout after graduation from the university.

Keywords: academic performance, students, lifestyle, physical activity, medical university

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ВЗАИМОСВЯЗЬ ПОВЕДЕНЧЕСКИХ ФАКТОРОВ, ФИЗИЧЕСКОЙ АКТИВНОСТИ И УСПЕШНОСТИ ОБУЧЕНИЯ В МЕДИЦИНСКОМ ВУЗЕ

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Во время обучения в медицинском вузе молодые люди сталкиваются с высокой учебной нагрузкой. Обучение в вузе происходит в динамически изменяющихся условиях. Психологический дискомфорт, низкий уровень физической активности, несоблюдение принципов рационального питания, вредные привычки могут негативно влиять как на физическое здоровье, так и на успешность обучения студентов. Представлен обзор научных статей, опубликованных в международных и российских базах данных eLibrary, PubMed, КиберЛенинка в 2019–2024 гг. Анализ публикаций позволит отобрать лучшие практики здоровьесбережения. Сведения о взаимосвязи поведенческих факторов и успешности обучения в медицинском вузе и здоровья необходимы для составления программ профилактики. Разработка упражнений с учетом индивидуальных предпочтений в физической активности может благоприятно отразиться на успешности обучения, уменьшить психоэмоциональный дискомфорт, тем самым снизив риск профессионального выгорания после окончания учебного заведения.

Ключевые слова: успешность обучения, студенты, образ жизни, физическая активность, медицинский вуз

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Health preservation during training is relevant for students in all countries. The learning process is accompanied by alteration of social conditions and lifestyle [1, 2].

Today, it seems urgent to maintain the contingent of students in medical universities due to the shortage of doctors in the Russian Federation. It is traditionally believed that academic load associated with mastering medical specialties, especially in junior students, is considerably higher compared to the workload of students with other directions of training [3].

Health deterioration can be one of the causes of academic performance reduction leading to termination of training. It is well-known that behavioral factors associated with lifestyle are considered to play an important role in health preservation under changing conditions [4].

The lack of motivation to learn and the increasing psychological discomfort represent the factors both reducing academic performance during training and leading to leaving the profession after graduation from the higher educational institution [5]

Investigation of the effect of health preservation indicators on academic performance in specialists mastering the postgraduate training programs is also relevant [6].

The study aimed to assess and summarize information about the effect of health preservation indicators on academic performance in medical students.

The review of scientific papers published in the international and Russian databases, E-Library, PubMed, Cyberleninka, in 2019–2024 was conducted.

Most papers are focused on assessing the correlation between academic performance and the young adults' health and lifestyle indicators during training. It is difficult to assess the effect of health preservation indicators on the academic performance of student youth due to its multifaceted nature.

Deterioration of the health indicators that are somehow associated with lifestyle, poor nutrition, excessive intake of fast food and carbonated beverages, insufficient sleep, reduced motor activity, increased psycho-emotional load due to learning intensity, as well as spending much time staring at the computer monitor, tablet or phone is more and more often reported in today's adolescents [7].

Reduced physical activity in adolescents is reported all over the world. And yet, regular physical activity is a potent method to adjust adolescents' body weight and prevent noncommunicable diseases in the future [8]. Knowledge of primary school students and their parents about hygiene is insufficient, which can reduce academic performance during training. The questionnaire survey of 322 primary school students and 487 parents showed that it was difficult to answer the question about permissible amounts of sugar and sugar-sweetened beverages on the daily diet for 68.3% of students and 70% of parents. Only 70% of students and 75% of parents specified the normal amount of salt in the diet correctly [9].

In the initial years of university, young adults demonstrate low adherence to the principles of rational nutrition. And yet, nutrition, being a modifiable aspect of healthy lifestyle, is more and more often considered as a prerequisite for successful learning. Thus, assessment of nutritional status in 663 Malaysian university students revealed the correlation between adherence to rational nutrition and academic performance [10, 11].

A systematic review assessing the students' adherence to the Mediterranean Diet showed that the decrease in consumption of fruit and vegetables, as well as the increase in consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages were negatively correlated to the average academic score in students [12].

Consumption of products with high content of low-quality fat, sugars can result in mental fatigue. Thus, assessment of the answers related to the daily diet of 161 students attending the medical university in Florida (USA) showed that students with higher academic scores more often answered that they did not consume fast food (63%), than students with lower academic scores (33%) [13].

Inclusion of fish and seafood, along with foods with high protein content in the diet can improve cognitive functions in young adults and have a beneficial effect on the learning process [14].

However, insufficient consumption of foods with high protein content is typical for student youth. Gender differences in food choices may also be observed [15].

Catering also has an effect on academic performance. Inclusion of breakfast in the daily routine can positively affect learning. Breakfast with loved ones has a beneficial effect on the young adults' psycho-emotional state [16].

Students master various programs when studying at the medical university. Young adults study principles of rational nutrition within the framework of hygienic training. Complementing the classes with the easy-to-memorize visuals, check-lists can improve the training process and thereby ensure the long-term storage of knowledge about the basics of nutrition in the future physicians [17].

Physical activity improves memory consolidation processes, brings the sleep-wake cycle back to normal, contributing to adaptation to training [18].

Assessment of academic performance in 379 female students of medical colleges in Saudi Arabia showed that students, who reported their physical activity status as low, had lower academic scores [19].

Physical activity status can change during training. The analysis of physical activity levels in young adults studying at the University of Munich (Germany) showed that more than a half of respondents reported the decrease in their physical activity during training [20].

At the same time, after graduating from the medical university, when being through the postgraduate education program, the physical activity status of graduates continues to decline, but the risk of professional burnout increases [21].

The data on the influence of various methods and physical activity complexes on adaptation and academic performance are controversial; the development of exercises for optimization of lifestyle indicators is currently relevant [22, 23].

Harmful habits have a negative effect on both students' health and their academic performance. Assessment of the risk factors of non-communicable diseases in 2036 medical students in Tomsk (1st to 6th year) showed that the rate of smoking reached 16.7%. The rate of alcohol consumption significantly increased in senior students compared to junior students [24].

Besides the fact that smoking negatively affects physical health and represents a serious medical and social issue, it also can negatively affect the young adults' academic performance. When conducting the questionnaire survey of 411 being through bachelor programs in universities of Canada, smoking was conducted as a predictor of bad marks [25].

In addition to low average academic score, medical students with the smoking experience of 2–3 years more often have academic debts. The increase in cigarette smoking is significantly correlated to the larger number of absences and debts [26].

Educational load can increase psychological discomfort in medical students. Anxiety can increase when the students' schedule is inconvenient, especially in individuals with the evening chronotype. It is traditionally believed that students of morning type demonstrate higher academic performance when mastering theoretical subjects, than students of evening type [27].

Psychological well-being is essential for training at the medical university. Comprehensive assessment and optimization of appropriate factors are a priority [28].

CONCLUSION

The accumulated knowledge about the impact of behavioral factors on academic performance in medical students should be taken into account when developing the programs for individual and mass prevention. Optimization of psycho-emotional state, motivation to learn in students can be realized through ensuring regular physical activity considering personal preferences. The development of personalized exercises can make it possible to improve academic performance of medical students, thereby reducing the risk of professional burnout after graduation.

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