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Original Contributions

An Assessment of Key Health Indicators among Emergency Medical Services Professionals

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Abstract

Introduction. Ensuring the health and productivity of emergency medical services (EMS) professionals is important. However, there has been no known national baseline assessment of the health and wellness of EMS professionals in the United States. According to Healthy People 2010, top indicators of personal health include physical activity, body mass index (BMI), and smoking prevalence. Objectives. The objectives of this study included quantifying existing health conditions and describing key health indicators among EMS professionals. It was hypothesized that work-life characteristics were associated with existing health conditions and key health indicators. Methods. Data utilized for this analysis were obtained from a 2007 questionnaire included in

biennial national recertification packets. This questionnaire utilized validated items from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and the Longitudinal EMT Attributes and Demographics Study (LEADS). Along with common demographic characteristics, items inquired about existing health conditions (diabetes, asthma, hypertension, myocardial infarction, angina, stroke, and/or high blood cholesterol level), general health, physical activity, and smoking status. Descriptive analyses were performed utilizing chi-square tests, and logistic regression was utilized to describe associations between existing health conditions and the key health indicators. Results. There were 58,435 individuals who became recertified in 2007, with 30,560 (52%) returning questionnaires. Individuals with missing data were removed, leaving 19,960 individual records. There were 4,681 (23.5%) individuals who reported at least one existing health condition. The mean BMI for the study participants was 27.69 kg/m. There were 5,742 (28.8%) individuals classified as having normal weight and 5,146 (25.8%) who were obese. The overwhelming majority of individuals did not meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for physical activity (15,022, 75.3%). There were 3,394 (17.0%) individuals classified as current smokers. Finally, logistic regression analysis indicated that when controlling for work-life characteristics and age, BMI and level of physical fitness were associated with preexisting health conditions. Conclusion. This study was the first known baseline assessment of EMS professionals regarding the key health indicators identified by Healthy People 2010. Investigations regarding the impact of health and wellness in relation to workforce stability should be undertaken. Further research should also be conducted to identify strategies to improve the health of the EMS workforce.

Key words: :

emergency medical services | emergency medical technician | occupational health | body mass index

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