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WORK RELATED STRESS

Work related stress has been defined in many, but a simple definition proposed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is “The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed upon them” (HSE, 2001). It has been estimated that in 2006-7 work related stress accounted for over a third of all new cases of occupational ill health with each case of work related stress, anxiety or depression leading to an average of 30.2 working days lost with a total of 13.8 million lost days (HSE, 2008). The most recent statistics which relate to the year 2006-7 from the Labour Force Survey found that the highest rates of ill health and absence associated with work related stress were found in 4 major sectors of industry: financial intermediation, public administration and defence, education and health and social work (HSE, 2008).

The aim of this assignment was to study the stress management interventions with an analysis of the generalized findings and then focus in on interventions aimed specifically at the individual health care worker through a literature review.

The findings of this review showed that a comprehensive approach to stress management interventions utilising both work directed and individual directed interventions are most effective. However, there are limited studies that look at work directed interventions with the vast majority of studies looking at the individual. In relation to the focus area of this assignment there is limited evidence which equates to multiple low quality studies with similar positive effects that individual level interventions in health care workers effectively reduce the levels of burnout, anxiety or stress. Most of the studies used several different intervention elements ranging from relaxation to cognitive behavioural techniques and most claimed that it is possible to change the individual’s cognitions about stressful elements of work. Clearly, this level of evidence is not conclusive and therefore more studies are needed which replicate, enlarge and improve the quality of the promising studies in the reviews and further studies which strive to understand the evaluation processes involved in stress management interventions. Only then can interventions be more effectively targeted to the problem.