12% of doctors with experience of needle stick injury (NSI) had post-traumatic stress reactions | 1


Abstract:

Background: Doctors are at particular risk of occupational needlestick injuries (NSI), and these may result in considerable acute anxiety and fear of disease transmission.

Aims: To measure the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among trainee doctors who had experienced an NSI.

Methods: A questionnaire was distributed to trainee doctors starting work in a large university hospital in the UK. The survey gathered demographic information and experience of previous NSI and included questions designed to assess the presence of PTSD via the Impact of Event Scale (IES), a widely used screening tool for PTSD. The six-item version of this tool (IES-6) was used in this study.

Results: Among the 147 doctors who participated, 80 (54%) had sustained at least one NSI during their training and 77 of these completed the IES-6 survey. Of note, 38% of injuries (30/80) were not reported to the occupational health or emergency departments. Using a cut-off level of 10 in the IES-6, 12% (9/77) of the doctors who suffered NSI during their training showed evidence of PTSD. Since the prevalence of PTSD in the general population is
12% of doctors with experience of needle stick injury (NSI) had post-traumatic stress reactions. Estimated at 3%, the odds ratio of PTSD in doctors who had NSI was 4.28 (95% confidence interval: 2.16-8.47).

Conclusions: NSI injury is common among doctors in training. As 12% of doctors with experience of NSI had post-traumatic stress reactions, special attention should be paid to psychological impacts of NSIs. We would recommend further prospective studies.