

Summary (in English)

The assessment of occupational stress and quality of life in teachers at the 2nd level of elementary schools

Introduction: Problems of the assessment of occupational stress have belonged within one of the key issues of public health protection.

Aim: The main goal was to comprehensively assess the extent of occupational stress and quality of life of teachers at the 2nd level of elementary schools, using salivary cortisol as a possible objective marker. Another aim was to evaluate the quality of life of teachers.

Methods: We performed an anonymous survey (a cross-sectional study) in 142 teachers at the 2nd levels of elementary school (reference group) and 136 firefighters (comparison group). Rate of occupational stress was assessed by using of the Meister Questionnaire. Subjectively perceived stress was subsequently objectified by determining of salivary cortisol. For the evaluating of quality of life, we used shorter version of the questionnaire WHO QoL-BREF 26.

Results: Our investigation showed that teachers perceive the level of their occupational stress was worse than in firefighters. Completed classification of mental overload reached grade 2 (health effects may be temporary), firefighters achieved of grade 1. The examination of salivary cortisol was entirely consistent with the results observed by using questionnaires. The final diurnal cortisol curve (morning and evening values, area under the curve) were in all cases significantly higher than in firefighters, which means worse managing of stress in teachers. Quality of life in teachers in all four domains was also significantly lower than in firefighters, but not statistically different from Czech population norms.

Conclusion: Our study showed that teachers belong to professions increasingly exposed to work- related stress with all negative effects on health. The investigation also demonstrated that the hygienic standard practice used the Meister Questionnaire is sufficiently valid for the evaluation of occupational stress. We assume that examination of salivary cortisol should be for the classification of work – related stress level more common than ever. It is an objective indicator of body's response to chronic stress, where taking of saliva samples is a non-invasive, which can be performed during all monitored day with including of the shift. However, we consider it's necessary to drawn up the reference curve of cortisol for Czech working population