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Situation of occupational health and safety among medical and sales representatives working in Nepalese health care market

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Background: Pharmaceutical marketing, often called medico marketing or Pharma-marketing is the business of advertising or otherwise promoting the sale of pharmaceutical products. It is evident that Pharmaceutical companies are spending more on marketing compared to its research budget. As nature of job, marketing and sales promotion needs consumer's satisfaction and fulfilment of their queries. It needs specific skills for the personals involved. In Nepalese market, there is no fixed working hour and work schedule for marketing personals. Moreover, all the pharmaceuticals companies producing and marketing in Nepalese market are from private sector and they have no clear provision for occupational health and safety about their workers.

Methods: It is the study based on cross sectional and descriptive design. Most of the information was qualitative in nature collected from primary sources. It is the first study in Nepalese health care market ever conducted, targeting the workers in Pharma marketing. The study involved 316 medical sales representatives (at least one from each company). Among them only 300 had responded the hand delivered self-administered questionnaire. Data was entered and analysed by using SPSS. Simple frequency tables were used for presenting the on descriptive ways.

Results: Currently, there are approximately 316(49 Nepalese companies and 267 Indian and multinational) pharmaceutical companies selling their pharmaceutical products in Nepalese health care market. Approximately 3800 human resources are involved in Nepal as medical sales representative (MSR). Among them 400 are females; pursuing some 16000 medical doctors and around 25000 paramedical workers as pharmaceutical prescribers. On an average each MSR has to call 12 prescribers with average working hour of 10 hours. More than 90% of the MSR has felt the problem of fatigue and pain on lower limbs at the end of the each working day. Almost all MSR are graduates either in science or management faculty. Average travelling per day is of 25 kilometres. More than one fifth (23%) of them are using public vehicle for transportation while remaining were using private two wheelers. More than three fourth (77%) of the MSR were found to have feeling of stress due to uncertainty of meeting given sales target. About one fifth (19%) of them were found to have psychiatric consultation where as nearly one third (31%) of them were found to have orthopaedic consultation within last one year due to their own health problems. Only 85% of them were found to be affiliated with Nepal Medical and Sales Representative Association (NMSRA) as Member. More than 90% of the female MSR were found to have any form of anxiety while doing their duty at evening (even up to 9 PM in some occasion).

Conclusions: Excessive work load, uncertainty of working hour, elongation of waiting time, uncertainty of meeting the given sales target, travelling of longer distance on two wheeler, less family attachment and poor job security were some of the pit-falls of Medical and Sales Representatives working in Nepalese health care market. Though most of them were found to be affected by job related stress, Physical health problems were found to be at higher proportion compared to mental health problems. To explore the determinants of occupational health problems among MSR an analytical study should be conducted.

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