

The influence of Balint groups on self-care and job satisfaction of primary care physicians - a descriptive qualitative study

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Introduction

The **shortage of primary care physicians** makes it necessary to take a closer look at their **job satisfaction and self-care**.

Higher job satisfaction reduces the risk of **burnout and job-related stress** and in addition will contribute to stay in the profession. **Specific competencies** seem to be important to increase job satisfaction, such as managing care, communicating with patients and a patient-centred approach with a high-quality patient-physician relationship.

"Balint work" could be a possible approach to increase self-care and job satisfaction.

Objective & Research Question

The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of regular participation in Balint groups on the primary care physicians' job satisfaction and self-care.

Can participation in Balint groups be recommended to improve self-care and job satisfaction among primary care physicians?

Materials and Methods

- Descriptive qualitative study with semi-structured expert interviews
- Literature search on PubMed, Cochrane Library and APA PsycInfo to inform the interview guide and to identify the current state of research
- 7 primary care physicians from 4 different Austrian provinces and 6 different Balint groups
 - Average professional experience: 18 years
 - Average participation in Balint groups: 10 years
- Coding software "MAXQDA" used for data analysis
- Thematical analysis of data and narrative summary.

What is "Balint work"?

Balint work aims to improve awareness of psychological factors in patient care and helps to gain a deeper understanding of patient's problems and diseases via regular case conferences.

Results

A total of 402 coded segments were categorised into 8 main themes and 39 subthemes.

Examples for the main themes are:

- Changes in self-care and job-satisfaction through Balint work
- Competences learned or improved through Balint work
- Balint work as burnout prophylaxis
- Feedback and connecting with colleagues
- Possible negative experiences



Figure 1: Word cloud with key words used by the experts

Discussion

- Job satisfaction is positively influenced by the majority of primary care physicians interviewed.
- Self-care requires constant attention and awareness of personal needs, which can be trained in Balint groups.
- 6 out of 7 experts consider Balint work as a burnout prophylaxis for themselves.
- Role models with high job satisfaction and a positive attitude seem to be important for students and young physicians.
- There are not many studies available for comparison, but the results overlap in terms of job satisfaction and burnout prevention.

Conclusions

Balint work can help to promote self-reflection, reduce perfectionism, set boundaries and take breaks. An increase in empathy and sensitivity towards patients can be observed. It can support the ongoing maintenance of self-care.

The results of the study support the hypothesis that Balint groups can be recommended to improve self-care and job satisfaction of primary care physicians

Limitations, Perspectives & Outlook

- A clear limitation is the small sample size, potential interviewer bias was also mentioned.
- Perspectives & outlook: Further research with larger samples is recommended to assess the replicability of these findings on a wider scale.

References

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