WORK ABILITY IN THE FIREFIGHTER PROFESSION.
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The Work ability is the foundation for wellness for all workers. Firefighters are frequently susceptible to stress because their job has high rates of physical and mental impairment during operational activities. The stress experienced by this group of professionals can impair the capability to work because the environment stress and diseases can accelerate the aging process that is related to changes in organ function per unit time. The health promotion and prevention of occupational diseases are important aspects for maintenance of work ability, resulting in a deep economic impact when favorable conditions are promoted for decreasing incapability and premature retirement. Objectives: To characterize the military firefighters professionals and estimate their capacity for work. Methods: A quantitative cross-sectional study. The survey was conducted with 192 military firefighters of Campo Grande, MS - Brazil. During the years of 2013 and 2014. Using a form with sociodemographic, labor and health data. And the work ability index (WAI) with analysis parameters between great, good, moderate and low. It was used the Pearson chi-square in order to evaluate the association between sociodemographic, labor and health on the ability to work with a level of 5% of significance. Results: The most of participants are men (83,7%), pardos (brown people) (53,5%), married (70,5%), high school complete (46,9%). The prevalent age group was 21 to 40 (41,5%), with middle age of 38,9 years old (standard deviation of 7,5). Median individual income was R$5.619,83 (standard deviation of 3.604,3). The number of dependent people for 50% is between 3 and 5 people. The most participants are sergeants (51%). The service time median was 14,3 years (standard deviation of 7,53). Morning and evening job were prevalent (86,5%) and 24x72 hours scale (work 24 hours and 72 hours free) was prevalent with 77,5%. About occupational accidents, 62% of all firefighters declared not to have had exposure to accidents. 92% of participants say that they practice physical exercises, doing it weekly. The most of them do not smoke (97%), do not drink alcohol (50,5%), do not use illicit drugs (99,5%) and do not have chronic diseases. It was observed that 51% are overweight and blood pressure levels are ideal for 67% of participants. In the Work Ability Index, the “good” parameter has 38%, but it is too much near of “moderate” parameter. “Great” parameter is 25,5% and “low” parameter is 3,5%. It was observed significant association between age and Work ability Index (p=0,018).

Discussion: Stressful factors to firemen, overload of functions, shift changes, and alternating cycles creates anxiety at work place and at rest place. Due to the work overload it was found that the wear of the musculoskeletal system is connected to possible risk factors to work accidents involving musculoskeletal disease, such as, column and knee injuries. Physical activities are responsible for increase the physical performance of these professionals and this represents an improvement at body function and also is fundamental for some particularities of the profession, where speed and efficiency must be together. The low prevalence of smoking habits related with firemen and general population, indicates relevance of an employment by public contract of social protection in explaining harmful and health habits, and also internal regulation of tobacco consumption and exercise practices. One of the factors that can lead to overweight are advocated muscle mass, due to a higher density than fat mass. Which would probably have led the professionals to be classified with overweight and obesity, when the truth is that they have a higher percentage of muscle instead of fat. Capacity studies for the work with military firemen and other populations present results between a good and moderate index in different groups of age [1], however the difference between groups is statistical significant, because it demonstrate that with the aging, exist a tendency in decrease the work ability [2,3].

Key words: Work Ability assessment; Firefighters; Occupational health.

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