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Do we practice what we preach?

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Introduction: Healthcare workers advise their patients on healthy lifestyle habits, but their personal behavior may not align with these recommendations[1-3]. The aim of this study was to determine the extent to which healthcare workers follow the recommendations they give to patients regarding a healthy lifestyle.

Methods: An anonymous and voluntary survey was conducted among 38 healthcare workers at the Institute for Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation in Zagreb. It assessed participants' age and gender, dietary habits, physical activity, smoking, alcohol consumption, sleep quality, stress levels and frequency of preventive health check-ups, as well as their self-assessment of consistency between personal behavior and advice given to patients. The data were analyzed descriptively, using the number and percentage of responses.

Results: 35 of the participants were women (92.1%) and the largest age group was 50-59 years (34.2%). Among participants, 68.4% of them had more than 20 years of work experience. 47.4% reported moderate physical activity on approximately two days per week, while 28.9% of participants reported smoking. As many as 65.8% sleep six hours or less on weekdays, whereas only 36.8% reported regular preventive health checkups. Only 52.6% of participants consider themselves living mostly or fully following the advice they give to their patients, and the majority of participants (81.6%) believe that healthcare workers should be role models for patients. 63.2% claim that lack of time was a barrier to leading a healthier life.

Conclusion: The findings reveal a gap between professional recommendations and participants' personal habits, especially in the areas of physical activity, sleep and preventive care. Greater emphasis should be placed on personal health and on working conditions that facilitate better self-care. Due to the small sample size and self-reported data, these results cannot be generalized to the broader population.

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