

Factors that influence physicians' burnout
Impact of a communication skills training program

I. Bragard¹, Y. Libert², I. Merckaert³, J. Boniver¹, N. Delvaux³, A.-M. Etienne¹, J. Klastersky³, S. Marchal⁴, C. Reynaert², P. Scalliet², J.-L. Slachmuylder⁴, D. Razavi³

¹ Université de Liège, ² Université Catholique de Louvain, ³ Université Libre de Bruxelles, ⁴ C.A.M. (training and research group)

INTRODUCTION. No study has yet assessed the impact of physicians' skills acquisition after a communication skills training program on their level of burnout.

PURPOSE. First, to compare in a randomized design the impact, on the level of physicians' burnout, of 1-hour theoretical information course followed by two communication skills training programs: a 2.5-day basic training program and the same training program consolidated by six 3-hour consolidation workshops. Second, to investigate contextual factors and communication variables associated with physicians' level of burnout.

METHODS. Physicians, after attending the basic training program, were randomly assigned to consolidation workshops or to a waiting list. Training efficacy was assessed through simulated two-person interviews which were audiotaped at baseline and after consolidation workshops for the consolidation-workshops group, and 5 months after the end of basic training for the waiting-list group. Physicians' communication skills were assessed according to the Cancer Research Campaign Workshop Evaluation Manual. Physicians' level of burnout was assessed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) at the same times.

RESULTS. No statistically significant changes over time and between groups in physicians' MBI subscales scores was observed. Meanwhile some physicians' communication skills improvements were associated with a decrease of their personal growth.

CONCLUSIONS. These results would be important to take into account in developing communication skills training program.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. This research program was supported by the « Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique - Section Télévie » of Belgium and by the C.A.M., training and research group (Brussels – Belgium).