

Correspondence:

Health status of journalists

Journalists, by virtue of their occupational requirements constitute a highly stressed group of professionals in the society. Sparse data are available regarding their health condition and the profile of the burden of diseases among journalists and their immediate family. The present prospective study of journalists and their family members was undertaken at Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences (SVIMS), Tirupati during the period November 2010 and January 2011. In all of them, a detailed history was obtained including documentation of responses to Epworth Sleepiness Scale.¹ A thorough physical examination, including anthropometry, screening for hypertension was carried out. Details of known co-morbid conditions were documented. Laboratory testing included haemogram; serum biochemistry including screening for diabetes

mellitus, dyslipidaemia; liver function and renal function tests; urine examination; chest radiograph (postero-anterior view); and electrocardiogram. The study was funded by Sri Balaji Arogya Vara Prasadini (SBAVP) scheme of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

During the study period, 90 subjects (45 males) were studied. Their age range was 13-72 years. Obesity defined as body mass index (BMI) greater than 25 kg/m² was found in 46 (51%) subjects. The prevalence of various diseases and dyslipidaemia that were identified are listed in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.² Compared with prevalence figures of obesity among middle class subjects in India the figure of 51% observed in the present study is high and reflects the rising trends in obesity observed in South-east Asia.^{3,4}

Table 1: Prevalence of various diseases in journalists and their family members (n=90)

Disease	No. (%)
Acid-peptic disease	14 (16)
Hypertension	13 (14)
Prehypertension (SBP >120 <139 mm Hg; DBP >80 <89 mm Hg)	42 (46)
Diabetes mellitus	10 (11)
Anxiety disorder	06 (7)
Bronchial asthma	06 (7)
Excessive daytime sleepiness	05 (6)

SBP = systolic blood pressure; DBP = diastolic blood pressure

Table 2: Prevalence of dyslipidaemia*

Risk factor	No. (%)
High serum cholesterol (> 239 mg/dL)	19 (21%)
High serum triglycerides (> 199 mg/dL)	14 (16%)
Low HDL (< 40 mg/dL in males; <50 mg/dL in females)	43 (48%)

*as defined in the National Cholesterol Education Program, Third Adult Treatment Panel (NCEP - ATP III) report (reference 2)

HDL = High density lipoprotein

Obesity, hypertension, prehypertension, diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia which are important coronary artery diseases (CAD) risk factors⁵ were found to be common problems among journalists and their family members. Reduced high density lipoprotein cholesterol was the most commonly observed lipid abnormality. Excessive daytime sleepiness, a harbinger of sleep disordered breathing was also frequently observed in the present study. High prevalence of acid-peptic disease and anxiety disorders reflect the high stress levels faced by these persons. Several of these health problems are modifiable with appropriate life-style modification and medications. This information may be useful for health policy makers to evolve community level intervention measures.

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