



## **THE PECULIARITIES OF THE PSYCHOSOCIAL WORK ENVIRONMENT IN PERSONAL HEALTHCARE INSTITUTIONS DURING THE CHANGE: PROFESSIONAL HEALTH AND PERSONNEL SAFETY AND HEALTH SPECIALISTS APPROACH**

**The head of research:** PhD Toma Jasiukevičiūtė-Zelenko

**Executing researcher:** Justyna Kolesnik (up to October, 2022), Neringa Bagdonaitė (from November, 2022)

**Research implementation period:** year 2022

**Research rationale:** In 2019 the COVID-19 pandemics focused attention on the elimination of extreme consequences related to the professional health of doctors. During this stressful pandemic period, the professional health of doctors and all hospital personnel were faced with new psychosocial challenges within the working environment, with special attention paid to professional health and personnel safety as well as health specialists. These professionals and other administrative staff related to the welfare of personnel makes an important link, which is crucial to maintain the hospital's human resources – the medical personnel's – ability to work smoothly, healthily and safely during crisis.

**The purpose of this research:** to reveal the characteristics of the psychosocial work environment in personal health care institutions (PHCI) during the period of change, based on the point of view of personnel safety and health (PSH), professional health (PS) and specialists performing these functions.

**Research objectives:** 1) To reveal the attitude of PSH and PS specialists of PHCI to changes in the psychosocial environment of medical personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic; 2) To present a structured analytical scheme of psychosocial processes occurring in PHCI during pandemic, such as personnel interactions, expected resources and disruptions within the institution, and other important elements.

**Research methods:** Eighteen specialists from 14 hospitals located in different geographical areas of Lithuania participated in this study: 6 of them were in cities, 8 in smaller towns. Five professional health, 9 professional safety and health specialists and 4 executing their functions, 14 women and 4 men took place in this study. Participants were selected by theoretical sampling. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview, analyzed applying the thematic analysis method.

**Research findings:** The study revealed the empirical theory grounded in the experience of hospital personnel during pandemic, consisting of 2 main elements: 1) the psycho-emotional background of the pandemic and the psychosocial risk factors related to it, and 2) response to the pandemic experience as an emergency situation by mobilizing “core” team inside the organization. The main aspects of the psycho-emotional background of the personnel within hospital during the pandemic were: the experiences of situational uncertainty and insecurity, as well as situational anxiety and fatigue states

leading to chronic burnout was characteristic of the pandemic period. The study also revealed the importance of professional health and safety and health specialists role at workplace regarding necessity to contribute to the management of pandemics and personnel safety and assurance of health in extreme situation conditions. New situations of lack - personal protective equipment, adequate information and human resources were faced by hospital specialists. These specialists describe the period of the pandemic, particularly its beginning, as stressful, full of changes of priorities and activities within hospital, emphasizing the importance of appropriate communication and team mobilizing when dealing with new challenges. In this study, social support emerged as extremely important working environment supporting factor, which helped to "survive" during the crisis period - emotionally contain uncertainty, insecurity, anxiety and fatigue, to go through intensive personnel change processes and withstand conflicts, as well as to transmit information related to safety and health at workplace, and educate personnel "gently": i.e. in an emotionally supporting, providing space and time for learning, tolerating mistakes and misunderstandings fashion.

More information can be provided by Toma Jasiukevičiūtė-Zelenko, Chief Specialist of the Professional Health Research Department of the Professional Health Center of the Institute of Hygiene, tel. no. +370 5 212 2589, e-mail: [toma.zelenko@hi.lt](mailto:toma.zelenko@hi.lt).

**Contact:** Toma Jasiukeviciute-Zelenko, Institute of Hygiene, Professional Health Centre, Department of Professional Health Research, phone no. +370 5 212 2589, e-mail: [toma.zelenko@hi.lt](mailto:toma.zelenko@hi.lt).