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THE INFLUENCE OF RISK FACTORS ON OCCURANCE OF TINNITUS AMONG CALL CENTER EMPLOYEES AND CONTROL GROUP

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Introduction: The problem of tinnitus is undervalued. Prevalence of tinnitus range from 10% to 49% for men and from 6% to 30% for women. However, people with light tinnitus do not seek for medical help. The aim was to evaluate tinnitus occurrence and how risk factors affect its prevalence in call center and control groups.

Methods: The questionnaire survey was held in January - March of 2019 for working in call centers (N=74) and control (N=74) groups. A specific online questionnaire was designed to cover three topics of interest: demographic factors, work related factors and tinnitus characteristics. The data received was processed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS 22.0 programs. The difference between two groups was considered significant when $p < 0.05$.

Results: Average age in both groups was not significantly different: respectively $27.6 \pm 8,7$ vs. $24 \pm 6,74$ years old; proportion of male/female: respectively 15/59 vs. 30/44. Working in call centers indicated having tinnitus at least once in their lives and more often than control group respondents - 52 (70,3%) vs. 47 (63,5%), though this difference was not significant ($p=0,382$). Among these 52 target group respondents 18 (34,6%) indicated, that tinnitus occurred immediately after starting working in call center, 9 (17,3%) mentioned that before experienced tinnitus intensified and re-occurred. Risk factors are common among both groups : smoking: 36 vs. 15; alcohol drinking: 64 vs. 70; coffee drinking: 64 vs. 55; energy drinks consumption: 27 vs. 24; attendance of places with loud music: 70 vs. 66, use of headphones in leisure time: 65 vs. 66. Consumption of alcoholic beverages has connection with tinnitus occurrence ($p=0,025$) and its permanent nature ($p=0,037$) in target, and with tinnitus occurrence ($p=0,039$) in control group. Consumption of energetic drinks is connected to longer tinnitus duration ($p=0,018$) in target group and tinnitus occurrence ($p=0,019$) in control group.

Conclusions: Respondents working in call centers experience tinnitus not more often than control group respondents, though to one third of target group respondents tinnitus occurred only after starting work in call center. Consumption of alcoholic beverages and energetic drinks influences occurrence of tinnitus.

Keywords: tinnitus, call center workers, risk factors.