

Covid_19

After all what makes the firefighter's performance so stressful?

COVID-19 is the name, attributed by the World Health Organization, to the disease caused by the new coronavirus SARS-COV-2, which can cause severe respiratory infection such as pneumonia. This virus was first identified in humans in late 2019, in the Chinese city of Wuhan, Hubei province, and cases have been confirmed in other countries.. (DGS, 2020)

The appearance of this virus, easily contagious, which is transmitted by fluids, secretions and aerosols, radically altered life in society and inherently the work of firefighters.



Figure 1- One of the scary images associated with Covid_19
(<https://correiodominho.pt/noticias/bombeiros-sapadores-infectados-com-covid-19-vao-receber-salario-a-100/124123>)

The invisible biological threat caused a worldwide pandemic declared by the WHO on March 11, 2020, in which contagion phases, contingency plans, alteration of working hours to minimize contact and contagion, critical use of personal protective equipment become the new normality in conversations and news.

The theatre of operations, be it in a pre-hospital environment or outside it, as a simple door opening, in a road accident, in a corpse transport, in a fire where there are victims, where we have to assume that each one is an infected potential, is an environment of hazardous materials.

Yes Covid_19 is a dangerous, biohazardous material!

A dangerous matter that is different from the usual ones, but where such work circles, the cold zone, the temperate zone and the hot zone

start to have a greater amplitude, we no longer have a cold zone, because even in the fire station we have to protect ourselves, and every time we leave we are in the hot zone, we have to protect ourselves in any and all situations for an intervention with hazardous materials in a hot tempered zone.

After almost three months of all this "terror", we wonder if only today are we facing these circumstances of operation or after all Covid_19 is another serious disease that we can contract like many others, transmitted in a similar way, in the course of our professional activity.

Effectively, the pandemic in its breadth came to interfere with the feelings and procedures, of the firefighters and of society as a whole, when, or, if this becomes part of the routine, we will never be the same, after all, we are in the middle of an attack in that the explosion period has started and has not yet ended. Just a little research and it is easy to see that many other diseases have always been present, and contract in the same way, are examples of this:

"Tuberculosis is transmitted mainly by air through the inhalation of droplets, expelled by the sick person when he coughs, speaks or sneezes. When inhaling air with bacilli, they will settle in the lungs."
(DGS, 2020)

"6 diseases transmitted by saliva... 1. Mononucleosis... 2. Mumps... 3. Candidiasis (thrush)... 4. Herpes simplex... 5. Chickenpox... 6. The flu ..." (Cândido, 2016)

If we research more deeply, we may see that we make it easier many times in our lives. In fact, we never leave the temperate zone, the risk always exists with many names other than Covid_19.

In this scenario, we again ask ourselves whether the lifelong training of a firefighter should be loose ends (courses), or the paradigm must change and increasingly the training must be multidisciplinary and

strategically aligned with the real needs, risks and innovations of every fire service.

To rethink the formation let us look at Seymour Papert's analogy when we imagine ourselves:

a group of time travellers, including a group of medical surgeons and a group of professors, arriving from the last century, to see how things are going today. Imagine the surprise of surgeons when they enter an operating room in a modern hospital! 19th century surgeons would not be able to understand what those so-so-dressed guys were doing. While realizing that any surgical operation was taking place, they would most likely be unable to identify it. The antiseptic rituals, the application of anaesthetics, the beeps of electronic devices and even the intense light would be completely unknown to you. They would certainly feel unable to help.

How different, however, the reaction of time-traveling teachers to enter a modern classroom! Perhaps they were intrigued by the existence of some strange objects, by the styles of clothing and haircut, but they would understand most of what was happening perfectly and could even, in the blink of an eye, take care of the class. Naturally, they would discuss among themselves whether the changes observed were for better or for worse. (Papert, 1997, pp. 211,212).



Figure 2: Evolution of times and profiles of firefighters. (imagen: http://www.firefighterfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/DSC_0028.jpg)

Training has to keep up with the times, knowledge, innovation, learning, the art of training firefighters has to change because the firefighter has also changed, today he is a digital native with different characteristics, other motor skills, and a perspective

towards life and learning that allow us to look at life as a life of permanent learning. Our workplace has changed, with new products, new compositions, new needs; innovation at the service of the firefighter has changed, bringing better protection equipment, but also greater exposure to risk without real perception of it, society has changed and biological threats are now a reality that we are learning to deal with systematically.

Following the aims of the International Labour Organization, which since its founding in 1919 has a strategy to manage “globalization, promote sustainable development, eradicate poverty and ensure that everyone can work with dignity and security” (Trabalho, 2007, p. 1), and continuing our vision, that the future of firefighter training will surely

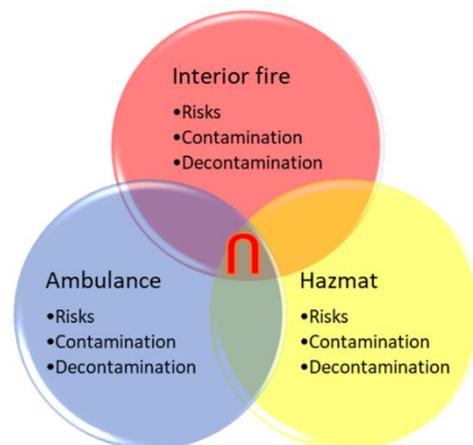


Figure 3 - Common parts between different interventions.

involve multidisciplinary training, we consider that training in hazardous materials, where it is necessary to maximize the weighting and identification of the risk of exposure, the need for protection, as well as the need for decontamination, as a way of mitigating the risk of acting always in accordance with the magnitude of risk and

exposure, is one of the links in all areas of training, with the awareness that overzealousness has never hurt the nobody!

It is imperative to include this formative area in the initial training and throughout the formative life of the firefighter, whether in the theme of fire fighting, rescue and extrication, pre-hospital, door opening, or any other aspect of assistance in a strategic and appropriate way.

Covid-19 is a dangerous material, so are the smokes and gases resulting from a fire, and a victim with mononucleosis, mumps,... or any other flu that we can find in a road accident or in a "simple" door opening, too are interventions with hazardous materials.

There is no point in telling the trainee that there must be "universal safety conditions and precautions in the pre-hospital service", these must always be present! For this, it is necessary that in each "loose end" of their training, the specialized training in hazardous materials must be contemplated, properly adjusted to each area and with a very special focus on the risk of contamination, the imperious protection to act, and decontamination.

In fact, all that the firefighter deals with is potentially dangerous materials, the risk, the need for protection to act, as well as the need for decontamination must be directly proportional to the area and magnitude of the matter in question! It is imperative that this area is an integral part of all training areas, so that professional diseases or illnesses caused by negligence or professional ignorance are eliminated from the firefighting activity.

In a society that evolves frantically and with it the methods, the technologies, with their positive and negative sides, it is necessary to change the way it is formed, it is necessary to articulate the characteristics of the students, with the existing resources, with the risks with which society is facing, it is necessary to stimulate the trainee for his self-regulation in the whole process of acquiring

knowledge, and for the way he puts into practice what he knows, and, mainly, that what he learns today does not prepare him for life for firefighter's whole life.

The trainee of today must be encouraged (Alvin Toffler) to have the ability to learn, unlearn and relearn as many times as necessary otherwise it is very easily framed in the profile of the illiterate of this century.

As we usually say, the best way to be prepared is to be aware that we are never prepared and should always be in a constant acquisition of knowledge. Lifelong learning must be a constant, through the most diverse ways, whether formal or informal, in a construct of vocational development.

We must be aware that we age from the day and that we are born until the day we finish and in that interval, we learn to read, we learn an art to work and support ourselves, but when learning throughout life, we will learn above all to adapt in an inclusive way in each phase of our life, contributing to life in citizenship.

Being aware of sharing and inclusion are part of the healthy condiments of the contribution to full citizenship!

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