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Nordic Occupational Skin Questionnaire – NOSQ-2002.

Nordic questionnaire for surveying work-related skin diseases on hands and forearms and relevant exposures

Summary in English

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Skin diseases are among the most frequent occupational diseases in Nordic countries and elsewhere. Occupational skin diseases on hands and forearms are often recurrent or chronic. Both the economic and social impact on the individual and the society is considerable.

The purpose of this project was to develop questionnaire-tools for surveying work-related skin diseases and exposures. The present report and questionnaires are compiled by a Nordic group. Target groups for this report are occupational health and safety professionals, health and safety authorities, health and safety managers in workplaces and industry, and researchers in occupational health research. The project was mostly financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers, which also has published the report in the TemaNord series.

A standardised questionnaire will benefit both occupational skin disease research and the prevention of hand dermatoses in practice. It will lower the threshold and costs for planning surveys and monitoring hand dermatitis prevalence. It will help to provide more comparable information on hand dermatoses in different populations. The presently designed tool can also be used for

monitoring hand dermatitis in workplaces, e.g. after interventions or other changes in work chemicals or processes.

Two questionnaires have been designed in the Nordic Occupational Skin Questionnaire (NOSQ) project. The questionnaires are based on existing Nordic questionnaires when available. Sections on exposure and urticaria, for example, are designed for this questionnaire as very few existing questionnaires include questions on these subjects. NOSQ-2002/SHORT is a short, ready-to-use questionnaire for screening and monitoring occupational skin diseases on hands and forearms. NOSQ-2002/LONG is a longer, more in-depth questionnaire for surveying hand dermatitis and risk factors in workplaces or in a population.

Questions on work and exposure can be tailored to specific populations, such as occupational groups, according to the instructions and recommendations given in NOSQ-2002/INFO version of the questionnaire. The long questionnaire can be used in full length or by choosing the relevant questions or question sets needed for a specific study. All the questions in the short questionnaire (NOSQ-2002/SHORT) are also included in the long version (NOSQ-2002/LONG).

NOSQ-2002/SHORT and NOSQ-2002/LONG questionnaires are included in the report in English, Danish, Swedish, Finnish and Icelandic. Internet access will be provided at www.ami.dk/NOSQ for downloading NOSQ-2002 questionnaires.

The NOSQ-2002 report includes a review of pertinent literature on questionnaire methods for skin disease studies. The NOSQ-group recommends using the self-report of hand and/or forearm eczema/dermatitis for estimating the prevalence of explicit skin conditions on hands or forearms in populations. According to validation studies, underestimation of the prevalence can be expected from self-reporting. Atopy's role as an important dermatitis risk factor is included. Also, a recommendation for the translation procedure, based on guidelines found in the literature, is described. This procedure has been used for the translation of the questionnaires included in the report. The importance of pre-testing a questionnaire on a sub-sample of the target population is emphasised. This is important not only for new translations and with questionnaires including new or population-adapted questions, but also when using a standard questionnaire in new populations. Although exposure and work place questions must often be adapted to the population under study, the wording (meaning) of the dermatitis questions should remain as they appear in the original NOSQ-2002.

The use and origin of all questions and question sets are described in detail. Practical aspects of questionnaire design are included, such as variable naming and coding, so that analysis, the combination of data sets, and reference to NOSQ-2002 is easy.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has the copyright to the NOSQ-2002 questionnaires. Use of the questionnaires is free of charge. The NOSQ-2002 questionnaires and their present and possible future translations cannot be used commercially.

The Nordic Occupational Skin Questionnaire Group welcomes feedback from users of the questionnaires. This can be sent directly to the group members or via the feedback form to be established on the NOSQ Internet location: www.ami.dk/NOSQ.