

Hand Eczema among Copenhagen Hairdressers

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Background

Hand eczema is a well-known problem among hairdressers due to long periods of wet exposure and skin contact with chemicals. Hair cosmetic products such as hair dyes, bleaching agents and permanent wave solutions can cause contact allergy and extensive wet work can cause irritant contact dermatitis.

Aim

The aim of the study is to investigate the prevalence of hand eczema in a Copenhagen population of hairdressers.

Methods

Questionnaires were sent to 1689 Copenhagen members of Danish Hairdressers & Beauticians Union and Danish Hairdressers' Association. Students were also included. The questions were concerning skin problems and use of gloves. The participation rate was 64% (N=1063).

Table 1. Have you had hand eczema? (n=1035)

Have ever had hand eczema	46 %
Have had hand eczema within the last year	22 %
Have had hand eczema within the last week	10 %

Results

Most of the hairdressers were women (89%). The most typical age was 25 years (range 16-84 years). Most of the participant (80%) worked as hairdressers in a salon. Almost all (96%) used gloves during the day, 21% reported that they reused gloves and 13% reported that they turned gloves inside out. 10% have had hand eczema within the last week. The one-year prevalence of hand eczema was 22%. 46% have ever had hand eczema and 7% have ever had sick leave because of hand eczema. 73% believed that they have had occupational hand eczema but for only 13% it had been reported as an occupational illness to the authorities.



Conclusion

There is a need for prevention of hand eczema among hairdressers. Therefore an intervention study among hairdresser students and a questionnaire study concerning reporting occupational illnesses to authorities are on - going.