

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO ACTION

Today, Associate Professor Rosemary Nixon, will be presenting on preventing contact dermatitis in Australian healthcare workers at the Australasian College of Dermatologists Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) on the Gold Coast.

Healthcare workers are prone to develop contact dermatitis of the hands as contact dermatitis is a reaction that happens when a chemical comes into contact with the skin.

A/Prof Nixon says: “Contact dermatitis can be addressed by improved skin care measures. It’s important that health care workers understand that while alcohol rubs can sting, this is not an allergic response, and that overall, they are much better from an infection control perspective. Allergies can be reduced by improved formulation of skincare products and gloves.”

A/Prof Nixon and her team recently reviewed their experience of the assessment of 685 healthcare workers in their Occupational Dermatology Clinic over a period of 22 years. Eighty one percent were diagnosed with occupational contact dermatitis, with the most common diagnosis being irritant contact dermatitis (ICD) (79.1%), followed by allergic contact dermatitis (ACD) (49.7%).

The major substances causing ACD were rubber glove chemicals, preservatives, excipients in hand cleansers and antiseptics. ACD caused by commercial hand cleansers occurred much more frequently than ACD caused by alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHRs). The use of ABHRs is encouraged and the use of after-work moisturising creams for the hands is recommended for healthcare workers.

A/Prof Nixon says: “Through a project with Safe Work Australia and a partnership with Hand Hygiene Australia, we have introduced advice about skin care into national hand hygiene training modules. In addition, we have had contact with manufacturers to substitute weak allergens in skin cleansers. Accelerator-free gloves are also recommended.”

Dr Andrew Miller, President of the Australasian College of Dermatologists says: “This work highlights the way that evidence-based insights and practical advice on the management of contact dermatitis can be harnessed to produce collaborations that in turn directly influence the quality and safety of patient care and so improve health outcomes for all Australians.”

ENDS

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About the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD):

The ACD is the peak medical college accredited by the Australian Medical Council for the training and professional development of medical practitioners in the specialty of dermatology. They provide authoritative information about dermatology to Government, the media, other health professionals and the general public.

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