Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease

Research that makes a Difference

Mild hand dermatitis: identification and management practices

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BACKGROUND SECTION

- Occupational contact dermatitis is common in health care workers (HCW)
- A recent study of Greater Toronto Area HCW reported a prevalence of hand dermatitis of 31%
- Wet work is main cause of contact dermatitis in HCW
- Generally outcomes of contact dermatitis are improved the earlier the diagnosis is made
- Screening may be helpful in early detection of mild disease with resultant intervention to prevent progression to moderate to severe disease

SCOPING REVIEW

- A scoping review of recognition and management of mild hand was done
- The scoping review revealed
  - » There is little information on the recognition and management of mild hand dermatitis
  - » There is little information on the current practice of occupational health nurses (OHN) related to recognition and management of mild hand dermatitis

OBJECTIVES

- Describe how OHN identify and manage mild hand dermatitis
- Describe the barriers and facilitators associated with the identification and management of mild hand dermatitis in the hospital setting

METHODS

- The study was approved by the Research Ethics Board of St Michael's Hospital and the University of Toronto
- A qualitative design was used
- Purposeful sampling of occupational health nurses (OHN) in 26 hospitals in the Greater Toronto Area was carried out through e-mail distribution by the Toronto Occupational Health Leaders Group and the Ontario Occupational Health Nurses Association
- A semi structured interview guide was used
- The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed per verbatim
- Data analysis used directed content analysis
- The OHNs were asked to provide any resources they had or used related to hand dermatitis

RESULTS

PARTICIPATION

- 15 nurses from 11 hospitals participated (42% of hospitals participated)

WORK PRACTICES

Screening

- Screening is carried out at hire and if the HCW reports to Occupational Health with hand dermatitis
- OHN describe mild hand dermatitis as redness, dryness and the report of itching
- OHS differentiate mild from moderate-severe by the presence of cracks
- If there is evidence of a dermatitis the OHN collects a detailed history and examination that focuses on both severity and extent
- Use of tools: some OHN use tools

Management

- OHN primarily manage the hand dermatitis themselves
- They treat with moisturizers and review of hand hygiene practices
- They remove the HCW from front-line work if the worker's hands cracked
- They ask the worker to return for follow-up between 2-12 weeks, workers often do not return for follow-up
- If needed they refer the HCW to the organization's occupational physician or the worker's primary care provider

Resources

- They have few resources and, if available, focus on hand hygiene

BARRIERS TO SCREENING

HCWs do not go to Occupational Health if they have a problem

- The HCW manages the dermatitis themself
- HCW do not want the risk
- HCW are time pressured so lack the time to go to Occupational Health
- HCW think hand dermatitis is an inherent part of the job
- HCW think the problem may be underlying eczema, not related to work

Modification to hospital screening practices

- Approximately half of the hospitals have changed their screening practice and OHN no longer see new hires
- New hires self-complete a questionnaire and see a primary care provider for needed immunizations etc
- The questionnaire has very limited content re skin – if any it is often focused on latex allergy
- OHN review the submissions and follow-up as needed

Lack of collaboration between Occupational Health and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

- IPC leads training related to hand hygiene
- HCW over sanitize their hands
- Cracks are the IPC indication for removal form front line work

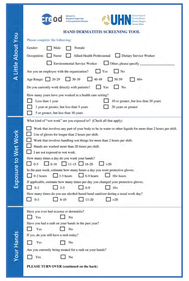
FACILITATORS

Education and awareness

- HCW need information on
  - » clinical signs and symptoms
  - » risk of wet work
  - » encouragement to use occupational health
- supervisors also need this education to instruct and support their workers

Common (used across all hospitals) assessment tools and resources

- development of forms that can be used by all hospitals
- Resource with pictures to help assess severity
- Flow chart for management
- Resources for workers


HAND DERMATITIS SCREENING TOOL

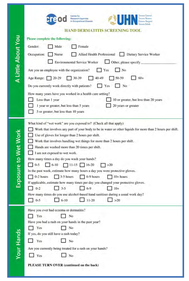
Please complete the following:

A Little About You

Exposure to Wet Work

Your Hands

PLEASE TURN OVER (continued on the back)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Next steps

- Public Health Ontario has a multi-stakeholder project "Hand Dermatitis in Health Care Workers"
  - » Part 1 – a systematic review of dermatitis in HCW (prevention, screening, management)
  - » Part 2 – development of needed resources to support prevention, screening and management

CONCLUSIONS

- OHN recognize the importance of hand dermatitis in HCW
- The assessment of severity and workplace management (i.e. removal from clinical work) is driven by IPC
- HCW don't want modified work that removes them from clinical activity so may be hesitant to seek help for their hand dermatitis
- HCW often do not follow-up with Occupational Health about their hand dermatitis
- There has been a change in practice in some hospitals with less contact by Occupational Health with HCW when they are hired
- There is a need for resources that are used across all hospitals

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