

ABSTRACT TEMPLATE

CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS

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Introduction: Some persons develop adverse reactions to polluted air around us that we have difficulties in understanding. They experience different kinds of symptoms at very low levels of the putative causal exposure, and may be classified as having “multiple chemical sensitivity” (MCS). The aim of this study was to study the occurrence of symptoms related to the smell of substances in different occupations, and to describe lifestyle factors and health related quality of life among persons with such symptoms. **Methods:** A cross-sectional study of a general population of 23,312 individuals aged 40–47 years in Hordaland County, Norway was performed. The participants answered questions concerning occupation, life-style factors and symptoms related to the smell of environmental agents. Health-related quality of life was estimated using the physical and mental summary scores of the SF-12 Health Survey. **Results:** 20% of females and 13% of men in this population experienced symptoms related to the smell of environmental agents. Such symptoms were most frequently experienced by painters (21%), restaurant workers (25%), mechanics (22%), drivers (23%) and assistants in industry (22%), while administrators had none of these symptoms. Comparing persons with symptoms related to smell with persons with no such symptoms within the five occupational groups with highest prevalence of these symptoms (n=760), revealed no differences in smoking habits, alcohol consumption, physical exercise or coffee and tea consumption. However, the persons with symptoms related to smell had significantly lower levels of quality of life related both to physical and mental health (t-test p=0.000 and 0.004, respectively). **Conclusion:** Experiencing symptoms related to smell are associated with certain occupations with triggering chemical vapours. Such symptoms are related to a reduced health-related quality of life.

Topic: (please select most appropriate term from list in author’s instructions)

26. Other topics: Chemical sensitivity

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I wish to be considered for the Young Investigator Award: No.