

Short Term Scientific Mission - Report

APPLICATION DETAILS

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Type of the Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM): Regular, from Croatia to Germany

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STSM Topic: Train the trainer education on occupational skin diseases and their prevention,
applicable in different settings and for different target groups

Host: iDerm - Institut für interdisziplinäre Dermatologische Prävention und Rehabilitation,
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1. Introduction and background

Within the course of the 6th Conference on Occupational and Environmental Exposure of Skin to Chemicals in 2013, a one-day workshop was organized in Osnabrück, at iDerm-Institut für interdisziplinäre Dermatologische Prävention und Rehabilitation, on education of patients with skin problems, either caused or aggravated by work. Having in focus patients with skin diseases and at the same time the origin of a disease with interdisciplinary approach in treatment, the workshop broadened my perspectives and gave a new sense towards prevention of contact dermatitis. The methodology used for knowledge transfer was interesting as it was designed to reach various groups of recipients, regardless of their

educational background with focus to present occupation, future possibilities and outcomes. Thereof, I sought for opportunity to deepen my knowledge on methodology used in design of this workshop, and to find a way how to transfer it, into another, more different setting. Regarding all, as a participant of the COST Action TD 1206, I have applied for this STSM as it represents the highly needed continuation of aforementioned quest for knowledge, an excellent opportunity for getting deep into this specific issue of education and a great tool directed towards joining efforts with experts from Osnabrück.

Finally, with joint efforts, this STSM will provide a solid ground in design of a model-education-course on occupational skin diseases and their prevention applicable in different settings and for different target groups, regardless of insurance systems being utilized. The overall outcome can also be of interest to members of Working Groups 5, 3 and 2 in the COST Action TD1206 as it will give opportunity for inter-professional cooperation and may open additional space for intervention studies, eventually providing standards in education applicable in different countries, participants of this Action.

2. Aims (purpose) of the STSM

The aims of this STSM were to:

- Analyze the methodology of knowledge and information transfer, developed in Osnabrück, for education of workers having an occupational skin disease (OSD) which can be used when developing standards in education within WG2
- Learn, more in depth, how to develop an educational seminar directed towards raising awareness and health preservation of workers having OSD and those who are at risk to develop OSD
- Produce a simplified education-check list for everyday use in occupational health practice setting
- Learn techniques to assess the individual skin barrier function which can be used in future intervention studies within WG3

3. Description of the work carried out during the STSM

Introduction

During the stay at iDerm in Osnabrück, I have participated in educational seminars, individual and occupational counselling and relaxation therapy, specially designed for dermatological patients having a suspected occupational skin disease, during their in-patient treatment, at the clinic. Along with that, I had the opportunity to follow the course of treatment and participate in ward rounds, with colleagues from the Department of Dermatology, Environmental Medicine and Health Theory. As patients with suspected occupational origin of a skin disease stay in the treatment program for an average of three weeks, during the STSM I have encountered and participated in all stages of in-patient treatment and education. The main point of the treatment is the multifaceted approach and

inter-professional collaboration which provide the best possible and the quickest possible results, all for patient's benefit. Work carried out during this STSM is described below through the description of activities in which I participated.

Education of patients

Education of patients is conducted by experts specially educated in knowledge transfer in healthcare settings, this time through seminars designed for patients with skin problems. The process of education follows four major steps, known as phase I, II, III and IV, through which patients have to pass within the course of their three-week-stay in the clinic. During these four phases of education, patients receive education and information on:

- structure and function of the skin,
- risks at the workplace and in private life that may cause skin disease
- protection, cleansing and nourishment of the skin,
- proper gloves for their occupation and working tasks,
- proper gloves for activities in their private life.

Along with courses, patients are provided with educational material for further reference and have a follow-up booklet in which every phase is described and checked.

Individual counselling

This activity is designed and aimed towards choosing proper types of gloves which will suit the patient's need at work and at home. The individual counselling is conducted at the Department for Health-education and is blended in with overall care and treatment patients get in the clinic. Here, from the extensive selection of gloves that iDERM possesses the perfect ones are chosen for each patient and tried out during counselling.

Ergo-therapy

During the Ergo-therapy patients are exposed to situations of their everyday work and of private life in which they have to use the gloves especially selected to suit them. Gloves that patients try out at the Ergo-therapy, are those gloves that were chosen for them and which were found to suit them most at the Individual counselling session. For the purposes of Ergo-therapy, patients meet with an expert in this field with whom they have the opportunity to discuss and encounter situations from their work, discuss the selection and use of selected gloves and to actually try out to work with gloves on their hands, all with the aim of having an individual, tailored approach in the management of the disease.

Relaxation training

Apart from other steps of this multifaceted approach, this is the most challenging step as contributes greatly to, what is known from literature, be the "holistic approach" in patient's treatment. Here, the stress is recognized as a contributing factor either for the onset of disease or in the process of healing. Lowering the overall level of stress is managed by relaxation training, guided by psychologist, during which patients learn how to induce themselves more easily into the calm state of mind, as it would enhance the effect of other parts of the treatment. Although it is known from the literature that many skin diseases have

strong, often negative, psychological impact in patients, until now, I haven't got the opportunity to see how to tackle this issue. I have experienced the training and heard the comments of the patients, overwhelmed with their acceptance and satisfaction with this new approach in treatment.

Techniques to assess the individual skin barrier function

On the third day of the STSM I had the opportunity to see the new method for assessing individual skin barrier function with the use of specially designed electron-microscope for the analysis of the keratocytes provided by the skin (epidermal) stripping. The methodology is easy to understand and easy to use, and I find it applicable in the future, when designing intervention studies having to do with determination of skin type, atopic skin and skin barrier function.

4. Description of the main results obtained

There are several results obtained during this STSM and all are settled on the side of creating the model for education, but with train-the-trainer approach. However, main results are:

- understanding the whole approach through an open debate with experts and an extensive question & answer session with conductors of the educational seminar
- collection of experts' opinions on important issues (e.g. how to tackle the challenges and overcome obstacles of having to educate patients resistant to the very idea of education and training in the course of treatment)
- exchange of different points of view on strengths and weaknesses of the „give information“ approach and finding ways how to tackle the weaknesses (for example, developing the evaluation questionnaire for assessment of effectiveness of knowledge transfer and raise of awareness in the target group and applying “homework tasks” after some phases of patients' education)
- ideas for future joint research activities (for example designing a „brick-by-brick model“ of education which applicable for in-patient treatment and in train-the-trainer education)
- learning new techniques of skin imaging
- improving personal skills in knowledge transfer important in education of adults
- production of a simplified education-check list for everyday use in occupational health practice setting
- professional and personal growth as a researcher and occupational physician

5. Future collaboration with the host institution

The knowledge, skills and expertise collected during this STSM will be exploited mainly at the Croatian Institute for Health Protection and Safety at Work, within my future efforts in

education of safety experts in Croatia. Further exploitation of my experience will be in the collaboration with the experts of the host institution, all organised via the COST Action StanDerm programme. Our future collaboration will provide results which can be used within the course of activities in the Working Groups 2, 3 and 5 of this Action.

6. Foreseen publications/articles resulting from the STSM

Many ideas emerged on subjects of future articles, of which those on design of the „brick-by-brick model” of education, the role of the workplace visit and their effectiveness in the management of the occupational contact dermatitis should be pursued as there is unmet need in this field of action towards implementation of educational tools and workplace visits with the higher goal of reducing the number of occupational skin diseases in the future.

7. Confirmation of the host institution of the successful execution of the STSM

8. Other comments

The host team of the iDerm in Osnabrück, prepared an excellent schedule aimed to meet the anticipated goals for this STSM. The schedule was fluently concerted with participation of fellow doctors and experts in health education. I have to give acknowledgments to each member of the team for friendly approach and expert support in all issues of concern. Their effort to have me as a guest member of their team together with their regular tasks they had to accomplish, made me feel welcome to ask even more questions as it enabled me to get involved more deeply especially into the field of education and individual glove counselling. Topics within the course of this STSM were numerous, and by no means simple, as they are developed by a multidisciplinary team of researchers. Yet, their presentation was excellent and always adjusted to the level of my knowledge and understanding of the occupational physician and a guest researcher. Therefore I received good introduction and a firm ground in a wide variety of topics which will help me deepen the collaboration between the host and the guest institution, and overall move forward the issue of prevention of occupational skin diseases.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Swen Malte John, Dr. Richard Brans, other fellow doctors at the Department for Dermatology, Environmental Medicine and Health Theory and fellow colleagues, experts in health education, Dr. Flora Sonsmann, Dr. Annika Wilke, Dr. Ulla von Saldern, Mrs. Julia Sauerzapfe, Mrs. Anja Hübner, Mr. Andreas Hansen and the host institution as a whole, for supporting this STSM, as well as the COST Action StanDerm for making this exchange possible.

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