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O-166 THE UTILISATION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION FOR OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES IN FINLAND BETWEEN 2005 AND 2020

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Introduction: The potential inability to return to previous work due to an occupational disease (OD) necessitates the use of vocational rehabilitation (VR). Objectives: This study aimed to analyze the utilization of VR in cases of ODs in Finland, with a specific focus on the diagnoses and exposure agents involved.

Methods: Data on recognised ODs between 2005 and 2018 were collected from the Finnish Register of Occupational Diseases, and compensation data between 2005 and 2020 were obtained from the Finnish Workers' Compensation Center and The Farmers' Social Insurance Institution Mela.

Results: A total of 31,891 ODs were recognised in Finland during the study period of which VR was used in 1,311 cases (4.1%). The predominant diagnoses requiring VR were asthma (357 cases out of 1541 asthma cases), allergic contact dermatitis (352 cases out of 2114), rhinitis (191 cases out of 854), and protein contact dermatitis or contact urticaria (107 cases out of 562). Diseases induced by flour exposure had the highest number and proportion of VR cases (262 VR cases out of a total 695). Other significant triggers for VR included animal epithelium, hair, or secretions (112 cases), wet work (74 cases), and synthetic resins and plastics (71 cases).

Discussion: Current knowledge about VR utilisation in ODs is limited both nationally and internationally. Work-related respiratory and skin sensitisation pose risks to the longevity of careers and often necessitate vocational rehabilitation.

Conclusion: It is essential to consider vocational rehabilitation in cases of occupational diseases as a preventive measure against permanent work disability.