Letters to the Editor

Send letters to Kenny Lin, MD, Associate Medical Editor for *AFP* Online, e-mail: afplet@aafp.org, or 11400 Tomahawk Creek Pkwy., Leawood, KS 66211-2680.

Please include your complete address, e-mail address, telephone number, and fax number. Letters should be fewer than 500 words and limited to six references and one table or figure.

Letters submitted for publication in *AFP* must not be submitted to any other publication. Possible conflicts of interest must be disclosed at time of submission. Submission of a letter will be construed as granting the American Academy of Family Physicians permission to publish the letter in any of its publications in any form. The editors may edit letters to meet style and space requirements.

Screening Questionnaire for Work-Related Health Problems

Original Article: Recognizing Occupational Illnesses and Injuries

Issue Date: July 15, 2010

Available at: http://www.aafp.org/afp/2010/0715/p169.html

TO THE EDITOR: We were delighted to see the article on recognizing occupational illnesses and injuries. Most adults spend a large part of their time at work, and it does impact their health.

Approximately 14 years ago, responding to a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy, the seven family medicine programs in South Carolina cooperated to produce a curriculum to teach environmental and occupational medicine to family medicine residents.[1,2] We created a set of five questions that physicians can use to screen patients for possible occupation-related health problems *(see accompanying figure)*.[3] We kept the format brief to minimize the time required to complete the screening while maximizing usefulness. Our questions were similar to those presented in the article, but different enough to merit mention.

These screening questions are the result of expert opinion (Strength of Recommendation: C), just as those mentioned in the article. Little research has been published to examine a set of questions as sensitive, specific, time-effective, and cost-effective. More research is needed to create screening questions that can identify potential work-related health problems in a brief time and that will not overly burden primary care physicians.

HUNTER E. WOODALL, MD
Anderson, S.C.
E-mail: hunter.woodall@anmedhealth.org

WILLIAM M. SIMPSON, JR., MD
Anderson, S.C.

STANLEY H. SCHUMAN, MD, DRPH
Anderson, S.C.

The WHACS Questions

What do you do?
- Industry:
- Job title:
- Years in position:

How do you do it?
- Repetitive motions
- Lifting
- Climbing
- Swing shifts

Are you concerned about **any exposures**?
- Noise
- Chemical
- Biologic
- Violence

Any **coworkers** with similar concerns?
- Work-related symptoms
- Rashes
- Respiratory illness
- Musculoskeletal problems

Are you **satisfied** with your work?
- Do you enjoy your work?
- Are you looking to change?

Figure. The WHACS questions for screening for occupational health problems.

Information from reference 3.

Author disclosure: Nothing to disclose.

REFERENCES

1. Schuman SH, Simpson WM, Smith WA. Environmental risk assessment: does it work for the community-based family physician? In: Proceedings from the Environmental Hazard Assessment Program/Family Medicine Symposium; October 26-27, 1995; Charleston, S.C.
2. Schuman SH, Simpson WM, Smith WA. The primary care physician as a bridge between disease causation and environmental risk. In: Proceedings of the Second EHAP Symposium; November 14-15, 1996; Charleston, S.C.
3. Division of Public Health and Publice Service. Department of Family Medicine—Medical University of South Carolina. WHACS. http://www.musc.edu/oem/whacsinfo.html. Accessed September 28, 2010. ■

Downloaded from the American Family Physician Web site at www.aafp.org/afp. Copyright © 2011 American Academy of Family Physicians. For the private, noncommercial use of one individual user of the Web site. All other rights reserved. Contact copyrights@aafp.org for copyright questions and/or permission requests.