

# **Psychosocial factors, life-style factors and health-related quality of life among transport workers**

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## **Background**

Workers within transport are exposed to several health risk factors such as noise, vibration, chemical exposures like exhaust fumes and petroleum products, job strain, safety hazards and troublesome working positions. A number of studies have shown an increased risk for heart diseases and stress-related disorders for this occupational group. We investigated psychosocial factors, life-style factors and the health-related quality of life among these workers in a large epidemiological study.

## **Methods**

The Hordaland Health Study '97-'99 (HUSK) was conducted as a collaboration between the National Health Screening Service, the University of Bergen and local health services. The study population included all individuals in Hordaland County of Norway born 1953-1957. A total of 22,312 individuals participated with a participation rate of 57% for men and 70% of women. Self-administered questionnaires provided information about current occupation and life-style factors including smoking, exercise, alcohol consumption and body mass index. The questionnaire also included the SF-12 Health Survey, assessing the health-related quality of life in a physical and a mental component summary scale. Questions concerning the psychosocial working conditions demands, control and social support were ascertained for a randomly selected subgroup of 6,500 individuals.

## **Results**

The group of transport workers consisted of train-, taxi-, buss-, lorry and truck drivers, as well as seamen (n=686). The transport workers scored lower on the physical health component in the SF-12, compared to the six other major occupational groups. They had also the highest prevalence of smoking and the highest mean body mass index, but the mean of the SF-12 physical health scores remained markedly and significantly lower also after adjustment for all life-style factors. The transport workers reported the same level of job demands and social support as the rest of the working population, but they reported significantly lower job control. There were also marked differences in demands, control and social support within subgroups of the transport workers. Train drivers and seamen expressed the lowest levels of social support.

## **Conclusion**

The reduced physical health among transport workers probably results from work-related risk factors rather than from an unhealthy life-style found among many of these workers. There is a need for further surveillance and improvements both concerning physical and psychosocial work environment among these workers.