Protect Outdoor Workers from Solar UV Radiation

Global Call to Action

Considering that:

• Non-melanoma skin cancer is the most common cancer in the world

• Solar ultraviolet (UV) radiation is the biggest cause of non-melanoma skin cancer in fair skinned people

• Solar UV radiation is classified as a Group 1 carcinogen by the World Health Organisation, along with substances such as plutonium

• In many countries, solar UV radiation is the main occupational carcinogenic agent, with 14.5 million workers exposed in the EU to solar radiation for at least 75% of their working time

• Current measurements in Europe reveal an unexpectedly high UV exposure in outdoor work places e.g. construction

• Latest research shows outdoor workers are at least at a twofold increased risk of contracting non-melanoma skin cancer

• Outdoor workers are less likely to protect themselves than non-outdoor workers, and are mostly unaware of the serious dangers of working unprotected under the sun
• Increased incidences of cancer negatively impact employers due to lost working time, as well as imposing additional costs to national healthcare and social security systems.

• More research is needed to establish the extent and impact of exposure to UV radiation during working hours and to establish a clear definition of outdoor work to assist the development of policies in this area.

• The International Labour Organisation (ILO) list of occupational diseases includes a recommendation to include diseases caused by optical radiation (ultraviolet, visible light, infrared) in national occupational diseases lists.

• However, only a limited number of countries recognise UV induced skin cancer, including actinic keratosis, in national lists of occupational diseases, and even in the majority of these countries, patients do not derive any benefit from this recognition.

Who has the power to change this?

Policy Makers  Employers & Workers  Doctors, Patients & Medical Regulators
Six Actions to Protect Outdoor Workers from Skin Cancer Caused by Solar UV Radiation

1. Improve the legislative framework to protect outdoor workers more effectively

2. Ensure official recognition of UV induced non-melanoma skin cancers, incl. actinic keratosis, as occupational diseases

3. Develop easy tools to measure exposure to UV radiation in the workplace

4. Build an evidence base on occupationally induced non-melanoma skin cancers, incl. actinic keratosis

5. Encourage multi-stakeholder collaboration to promote sun-safe working practices

6. Educate on the simple and cheap techniques of sun safe behaviour and prevention of skin cancer
I am a Policy Maker: What can I do?

INTERNATIONAL BODIES

• The World Health Organisation (WHO) should continue efforts to define work place exposure limits to solar UV radiation, which should then be used by member countries to develop national legislation.

• The WHO, together with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), should promote best practices in national policies to protect outdoor workers from the dangers of the sun.

• The ILO should update its 2010 List of Occupational Diseases and include even more explicit reference to solar UV induced non-melanoma skin cancers.

• The health economic community should develop global models on the economic costs of solar UV induced occupational non-melanoma skin cancer, including actinic keratosis.

• The international health community should develop international standards on the definition of outdoor work and the protection of outdoor workers from solar UV radiation in the workplace.

EUROPEAN UNION

• Encourage and participate in a multi-stakeholder dialogue to emphasise the need for preventative measures (e.g. protective clothing) to be put in place for outdoor workers, and to educate workers and employers on the importance of applying these measures.
• **Lead by example** by cooperating with international organisations like the WHO and ILO to **further raise awareness and share best practice internationally.**

• **The European Commission** should work with the European Parliament and Council to **update Directive 2006/25/EC on artificial optical radiation to take into account solar radiation**, including specific obligations on health surveillance of outdoor workers.\(^{14,15}\)

• **Update the 2003 Schedule of Occupational Diseases** to reflect the fact that there is a direct link between outdoor work and non-melanoma skin cancer caused by solar UV radiation. This **means including the disease in Annex I, Part 5** of the legislation.\(^{16}\)

**NATIONAL AUTHORITIES**

• Implement **ILO recommendations** related to the notification and recording of UV induced occupational diseases.

• Encourage employers’ and workers’ organisations in professions at particular risk of exposure to solar UV radiation to **develop social partner agreements** (to include e.g. sun safe working hours/procedures).

• Encourage national broadcasters and private media groups to provide air-time for **public service announcements on sun safety** for outdoor workers.

• Together with the private sector, provide **financial support to the development of innovative dosimetric technology** to measure exposure to UV radiation on the workplace.\(^{12}\)
• Provide dermatologists and other physicians with the tools and incentives to report cases of occupational skin diseases.

• Learn from good practices in secondary prevention and compensation of outdoor workers suffering from solar UV induced occupational diseases, especially cancers.

I am an employer or worker organisation: What can I do?

• Work with the dermatological community to develop national accreditation schemes for sun safe policies in the workplace.

• Collaborate to develop user-friendly sun safe guidelines for employers and workers.

• Use public and private funding to develop simple but effective digital tools (e.g. apps, UV-dosimeter cards, UV-index) to inform/remind outdoor workers how to protect themselves from the sun.

• Collaborate with authorities and national insurance systems to conceive and implement a global measurement programme to evaluate exposure to UV radiation among vulnerable groups during their working hours in comparison with their leisure time.
I am a doctor, patient or medical regulator: What can I do?

- Promote sun safe behaviour via social media campaigns and awareness raising activities, targeting workers in vulnerable sectors (e.g. agriculture, construction, fishery, forestry, athletes, swimming pool attendants, kindergarten teachers etc.).

- Carry out awareness campaigns to educate occupational physicians on how to recognise and refer occupationally induced non-melanoma skin cancer, including actinic keratosis, to dermatologists.

- Ensure that comprehensive training on the prevention of solar UV induced occupational diseases is included in relevant educational curricula of occupational physicians.

- Ensure that training on how to recognise and respond to these diseases form part of the revalidation criteria for general practitioners.

- Provide primary care physicians with the tools and incentives to refer cases of occupational skin diseases to dermatologists.
References


