

‘Skin Matters - It’s in Your Hands’

Mike invited BHSEA Members present to help themselves to the Deb skincare samples brought along today. Mike went on to ask generally how many people in the audience had heard of Swarfega? Most hands went up! Mike explained that Swarfega was the first product invented by Deb over 50 years ago. Deb UK also invented the first foaming soap and sanitiser.

Why is Skincare Important?

Mike told us that the skin is the largest organ of the body and includes around 3 million cells. Mike commented that many cases of dermatitis go unreported even though it is the second highest occupational health issue below back problems. Mike talked about the problems involved in working in different environmental conditions, in particular wet working and working outdoors.

Education:

Mike explained that he believes education to be an important area where more work needs to be done. One in five people still don’t wash their hands after using the loo. Occupational dermatitis cannot be cured in most cases, it can only be controlled. An employee who has never experienced a skin problem, can suddenly suffer from dermatitis. Irritant contact dermatitis is a serious condition and may mean that the employee cannot continue to carry out that particular work.

If you consider the harmful effects of sun damage, there remains a lot to do in terms of education. Mike gave us the figures...there are more cases of skin cancer in the UK than in Australia. Moreover, just because we cannot see the sun in the sky, doesn’t mean that the harmful rays are not there and causing us damage.

The Six Step System:

- Step One: **Protect**, particularly when employees are working outdoors.
- Step Two: **Cleanse.**
- Step Three: **Sanitise.**
- Step Four: **Restore.** Mike reminded us of the duty of care to mobile workers. If there is no access to water, a system for cleansing etc. needs to be put in place.
- Step Five: **Educate.**
- Step Six: **Audit.**

Dally thanked Mike for his presentation. We have been reminded of the key issues concerning skincare, and we know that the issue should be part of our COSHH procedure.