



SVENSKA CELLULOSA AKTIEBOLAGET SCA (publ)

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Nine-country study reveals vast differences in conceptions of hygiene

Today, SCA presents an international report on hygiene and sanitation. Among its conclusions was the finding that half of all Swedes are worried about becoming sick because of poor hygiene, while internationally a full three out of four have this concern.

The study, which was carried out in nine countries, focuses on peoples' conceptions of hygiene. How people feel about hygiene issues, where they might see health hazards in everyday life and what taboos exist surrounding hygiene issues. The aim was to gather knowledge and examine the issues through cultural comparisons.

"In some cases, behavioral differences between different countries are mainly a curiosity. In others, the differences are considerably more significant, since we see that behaviors contribute to a higher risk of illness," says Jan Johansson, SCA's President and CEO.

Rather than directly resolving the problems themselves, the study aimed to spotlight the issues and encourage discussion. The report also underscores the existence of a great deal of documented knowledge about these issues.

"There is a powerful taboo, in Sweden and internationally, concerning incontinence," Jan Johansson explains. "As a world-leader in incontinence protection through its Tena brand, SCA shows great responsibility in its work to defuse the issue and reduce the stigma associated with incontinence. In Sweden alone around 670,000 people currently suffer from some form of incontinence."

While health issues related to hygiene or sanitation are clearly more common in developing countries, even in Sweden there is a great deal to be done. In the Swedish healthcare system alone, according to the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, an estimated 600 deaths a year can be shown to have hygiene-related causes – in other words, far more than the number of traffic deaths.

Disseminating basic knowledge about hygiene can mean huge savings in the form of improved health. Greater awareness of the importance of proper hand washing, or knowledge of the relative merits of drying with hot air versus drying with paper towels, from a hygiene perspective, gains concrete significance even in a country like Sweden.

About the study

The study was commissioned by SCA and carried out by the United Minds business-intelligence company and the research company Cint.

It was carried out in nine countries: Sweden, the UK, France, Germany, Russia, China, Australia, the US and Mexico. Responses were collected through a Web panel. The

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participants totaled 4,842, distributed as about 500 people in each country. The study was designed so as to ensure a nationally representative gender and age distribution.

“There is a need for voices that are both willing to discuss hygiene and equipped with the requisite background knowledge. Hygiene and sanitation are in many ways key issues with a bearing on development in coming years. It is partly a matter of sanitary conditions and access to hygiene products but equally of disseminating knowledge and breaking down taboos,” Jan Johansson affirms.

Excerpts from the study

Incontinence is the subject that most people are uncomfortable about discussing with others. Of all Swedish respondents, 76% would not discuss it under any circumstances. The tendency is the same internationally.

Swedes are rarely worried about becoming infected due to poor hygiene, but all the more worried about being infected by other people. In the study, Swedes appear to be the worst at washing their hands in conjunction with meals.

In response to the question “What do you associate primarily with good hygiene?” 37% of the women stated that they consider a clean home as one of the principal hygiene issues. However, Swedes focus more on personal hygiene – more than any other group in the study – and do not consider a clean home to be an important hygiene issue. A full 42% reported that they clean their home every second week at most.

For the full report and press material, visit: <http://www.sca.com/en/Press/Publications/>

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