

## NORWEGIAN DIVER 2011:

### WHY OCCUPATIONAL INSHORE DIVERS IN NORWAY END THEIR DIVING CAREER

Å Irgens<sup>1</sup>, K Troland<sup>1</sup>, E Thorsen<sup>12</sup>, M Grønning<sup>134</sup>

*1 Norwegian Centre for Diving Medicine, Department of Occupational Medicine, Haukeland University Hospital, Bergen, Norway; 2 Institute of Medicine, University of Bergen, Norway; 3 Department of Clinical Medicine, University of Bergen, Norway; 4 Neuro Clinic, Haukeland University Hospital, Bergen, Norway*

**INTRODUCTION.** For former North Sea divers the mean duration of their diving career was 16.8 years. The aim of the present study was to investigate why occupational divers end their career.

**METHODS.** The Norwegian Labor Inspection's Diving Register comprises all occupational inshore divers who have ever held a certificate since 1980. From the 6151 male divers born 1950-90, 89.8% could be identified. A comprehensive questionnaire was mailed, 47.8% of which were returned. The divers were categorized into former divers (1577), present divers (588) and references who had minor diving experience (477).

**RESULTS.** At present 78.7% of the former divers held a different job, 4.2% were on sick leave, 7.5% received disability pension, 8.6% had old age pension and 4.1% were students, while 6.5% worked with diving logistics.

Eighty nine percent had listed at least one reason to why they had stopped diving: certificate of medical fitness could not be renewed (11.4%), health issues (23.5%), dissatisfied with working conditions (17.8%), dismissed (2.0%), anxiety due to diving (6.4%), got a better job (49.8%), new education (44.9%).

The former divers were dichotomized into choosing (had got a better job or took education, n=680) or forced to retire (the rest of former divers, n=428). Mean age at retirement in the group who chose to retire was 33.3 years, with a mean number of 1443 dives and 9.2 years as occupational diver. The corresponding figures for the group who were forced to retire were 38.5 years, 2661 dives and 12.1 years. Physical and mental health related quality of life (SF-12) were significantly lower for divers forced to quit.

**DISCUSSION / CONCLUSION.** Divers who were forced to end their carrier as divers were older, had more health problems and a lower health related quality of life than those who chose to do so.

Key words. Divers, career, stop diving