

# The Southampton Examination Schedule for the diagnosis of musculoskeletal disorders of the upper limb

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## KEY WORDS

Musculoskeletal disease; upper extremity; diagnostic criteria

## SUMMARY

**Background:** *The optimum classification of upper limb disorders (ULDs) remains a cause of debate. Recent efforts to address the issue have focused on translating the consensus criteria of experts into workable protocols for use in field epidemiology.* **Objectives:** *This paper describes the development and assessment of one such protocol, the Southampton Examination Schedule for ULDs.* **Results and Conclusions:** *In the absence of a reliable gold standard, the schedule has so far been evaluated in terms of its repeatability within and between-observers in clinical and community settings, and in terms of its capacity to distinguish groups with different severity of disease, different treatment needs, different risk factors and different prognoses. Findings to date are briefly summarised. The most pressing future goal in this field is for researchers to collect data on the component elements of diagnosis according to common evidence-based standards such as the Southampton Schedule in order to facilitate communication, the effective pooling of data and the empirical assessment of alternative choices of case definition.*