MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS IN THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR

Risk factors and practical solutions

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Introduction

Healthcare sector ~10%

Total workforce of the EU

Life expectancy

1980

2020

http://osha.europa.eu
Size of the problem
MSDs and risk factors

1. European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)
2. European Surveys of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER)
Yearly prevalence of back pain

The prevalence of MSD is high in the healthcare sector

47%

EWCS (2015)
Risk factors for musculoskeletal disorders – review of the literature

- Physical workload
- Individual factors
- Organisational and psychosocial factors

MSDs
Physical and psychosocial risk factors are more prevalent and have increased more from 2014-2019 in the healthcare sector* than in other sectors.

ESENER-2 (2014) and ESENER-3 (2019)

*) Human health and social work activities
Health & Safety efforts

Risk assessment
Regular risk assessment

Percentage of establishments in the EU-27 that carried out a regular risk assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All sectors</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ESENER-2 (2014) and ESENER-3 (2019)
## Reasons for difficulties in addressing health and safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Healthcare</th>
<th>All sectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The complexity of legal obligations</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The paperwork</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of time or staff</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of money</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of awareness among staff</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of expertise or specialist support</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of awareness among management</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although more than 3 out of 4 establishments in the healthcare sector of the EU-27 performs regular risk assessment, many experience trouble in addressing health and safety.

Protective approaches
Protective approaches

Organisational safety culture

Reduce the physical workload and strengthen the body to prevent and reduce MSDs.
Employee participation

**Percentage of establishments that involve employees in dealing with psychosocial risk factors**

- Human health and social work activities: 77%
- Education: 70%
- Arts, entertainment and recreation: 60%
- Information and communication: 50%
- Administrative and support service: 40%
- Accommodation and food service: 30%
- Other service activities: 20%
- EU27: 10%
- Public administration and defence: 0%
- Professional, scientific and technical: 0%
- Transportation and storage: 0%
- Wholesale and retail trade: 0%
- Water supply; sewerage, waste: 0%
- Financial and insurance activities: 0%
- Manufacturing: 0%
- Electricity, gas, steam and air: 0%
- Construction: 0%
- Real estate activities: 0%
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing: 0%
- Mining and quarrying: 0%

The healthcare sector is already good at involving employees in dealing with psychosocial risk. This can also be done with risk factors for MSDs.

**Types of employee representation across establishments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Employee Representation</th>
<th>Healthcare 2014</th>
<th>Healthcare 2019</th>
<th>All sectors 2014</th>
<th>All sectors 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works council</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade union representation</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and safety committee</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and safety representative</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ESENER-2 (2014) and ESENER-3 (2019)**
21/06/2020

Type: Discussion papers

Musculoskeletal disorders in the healthcare sector

Keywords:
Campaign 2020-2022

A growing care burden, recruitment difficulties and an ageing workforce mean that musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are likely to become an increasingly difficult occupational safety and health challenge in the healthcare sector.

This discussion paper reviews the literature on musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) in healthcare workplaces. It presents an overview of MSDs and their prevalence in the healthcare sector, reviews the risk factors and discusses effective interventions to prevent, reduce and manage MSDs in healthcare workplaces.

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