

Strategic prevention of musculoskeletal disorders in elderly care - DTU Orbit (08/11/2017)

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Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are a common designation for pain, stiffness or tenderness in the joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles or bones and the associated cardiovascular and nervous system often resulting in symptoms as swelling, restriction of motion and functional impairment. MSD is a serious and comprehensive work environment problem. It is also recognized as such in the Danish National Work Environment Strategy 2020, where MSD is ranked as one of three main focus areas with the aim of reducing the number of MSD incidents with 20% by the year 2020 (WEA 2020). It is estimated that the number of cases of occupational musculoskeletal disorders will increase in the coming years. MSD as a result of repetitive movements of the upper extremities will continue to be a challenge. Furthermore a great challenge is the prevention of MSD among younger employees (under 25), who are often more exposed to heavy physical work. The known risk factors for developing MSD are: 1) Heavy manual work including person lifting and moving, 2) Monotonous, repetitive and monotonous, stressful work, 3) Straining, awkward postures and movements, 4) Whole-body vibration (NFA 2009, National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine 2001). The first three risk factors are prevalent in the health care sector and employees are prone to develop MSDs due to the high level of manual labor e.g. physical handling of patients. The sector work environment council for the social and health care sector (BAR SOSU) has joint forces with researchers at the Department of Management Engineering with the aim of developing a set of tools to strategically prevent MSDs in municipalities. The 98 municipalities in Denmark are the primary provider of elderly care in home and nursing home and we expect to find varied but systematic approaches towards preventing MSD as well as MSD being a focus area for the work environment effort.

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Authors: Seim, R. (Intern), Edwards, K. (Intern), Poulsen, S. (Intern)

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