

French good practice guidelines for management of the risk of low back pain among workers exposed to manual material handling: Hierarchical strategy of risk assessment of work situations

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BACKGROUND: Manual material handling remains a major cause of occupational accidents and diseases in various sectors and occupations.
OBJECTIVE: This paper summarizes the main recommendations of the good practice guidelines of the French Society of Occupational Medicine for the risk assessment for back disorders in workers exposed to manual handling of loads.
METHODS: The guidelines were written by a multidisciplinary working group of 24 experts, according to the Clinical Practice Guidelines method proposed by French National Health Authority, and reviewed by a multidisciplinary peer review committee of 50 experts. Recommendations were based on a large systematic review of the international literature carried out from 1990 to March 2012 and classified (Grade A, B, C or expert consensus) according to their level of evidence.
RESULTS: The main recommendations are a three-level hierarchical method of risk assessment based on participatory ergonomics and suggested assessment tools that can be used routinely by professionals of occupational health, workers themselves and their supervisors.
CONCLUSION: These French guidelines are intended for professionals of occupational health in charge of the prevention of low back disorders. The recommended methods are applicable to other countries than France.

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