

**Report from workshop
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Ergonomy in laboratory animal care

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Ergonomy must not be seen solely as a physically but also as mentally oriented area of research.

Generally, good working practices are one essential part of ergonomically correct working routines. The obligatory prerequisite for development of individually optimal working conditions is free communication among the staff, from all levels.

An attitude towards flexibility in working practices and routine procedures should be promoted in the interest of both the management and the staff. By this the work may be arranged so that every worker has a chance to change from one to another work when there is a physical or mental need for change in working routines.

Animal attendant's work may be monotonous and repetitive by its nature: changing beddings, moving cages, weighing animals in large numbers. Measures should be investigated and implemented to relieve mental and physical stress caused by the monotonous and repetitive work phases. Interruptions and pauses during the working hours should not be planned to be passive but rather active relaxation phases.

The education of the personnel should lead to an understanding of the correct ways of

performing different physically demanding tasks, e.g. right body postures in lifting, movements in work and traffic within the animal facility. Special consideration should be paid to the design of the working environment. In this context attention should be paid to the provision of special equipment to facilitate especially such activities as lifting, carrying and cleaning.

It should be recognised also that many apparently non-physical procedures undertaken e.g. at the working bench or at isolators can in themselves be exceedingly demanding. They may require either high level of mental concentration or long-lasting static phases of work, as well as highly demanding intellectual activity and continuous decision-making. Therefore interruptions are essential parts of the work also.

Finally it was especially stressed that it is more important to invest in preventive measures than in the cure of already acquired health damages caused by wrong working conditions. If, however, damages already have occurred, the financial consequences of relevant treatments (e.g. physiotherapy, chiropractics etc.) should be supported or paid by the institutions.