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Project Ageing at Work: training adapted to the needs of human resources professionals

The introduction of sound, adapted health management in companies is one of the strategies being used in response to the increasing ageing of the working population.



Prevent has opted for this approach, and in November 2007 launched the Ageing at Work project in collaboration with five other European institutes (TNO and Hogeschool Utrecht in the Netherlands, the Work Research Centre in Ireland, the Nofer Institute for Occupational Medicine in Poland and EWORX in Greece). Ageing at Work, which will run over two years (until the end of 2009), is subsidised by the European Commission's Leonardo da Vinci programme.

Objective

The objective of the Ageing at Work project is to develop a training programme targeted at human resources professionals and focusing on older workers' health. Integral health management covers the following themes: well-being at work, health promotion, disability management and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

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Prevent is able to draw on its experience in this field. Ongoing projects such as Move Europe (www.move-europe.be) and IntroDM (www.introdm.be) demonstrate the interest that already existed in well-being and health management that takes account of all of a company's workers.

Individually tailored

Ageing at Work primarily seeks to analyse health concepts and experiences and synthesise them in an approach/training course aimed at HR managers who are confronted daily with the reality of an ageing working population. The training which is being designed will include both face to face sessions and e-learning sessions. To ensure that the course meets the needs of human resources professionals as closely as possible, they will initially be sent a questionnaire which will form the basis for a detailed needs analysis. The results of this survey will among other things be used in early 2009 to organise a pilot course (free of charge) in Belgium, the Netherlands and in Poland.

If you are interested, please contact Lieven Eeckelaert (l.eeckelaert@prevent.be)

European Week Round tables to mark European 'Lighten the Load!' Week

During European Week for Safety and Health at Work 2007, which was devoted to the prevention of musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs), Prevent organised two round tables bringing together the social partners, experts from the field and representatives of the hospital and transport sectors. The round tables, which were organised at the request of the FPS Employment, Work and Social Dialogue (EWSD), were held on 5 and 6 December 2007. The initiative's objective was to provide an update on the current situation and identify possible prevention and improvement approaches.

How the discussion progressed

After a presentation of the figures on MSDs in Belgium and of the initiatives of the FPS EWSD in this area, the participants (the authorities, representatives of the trade unions and employers and experts) discussed three topics: prevention risks and strategies; legislation; and approaches and research.

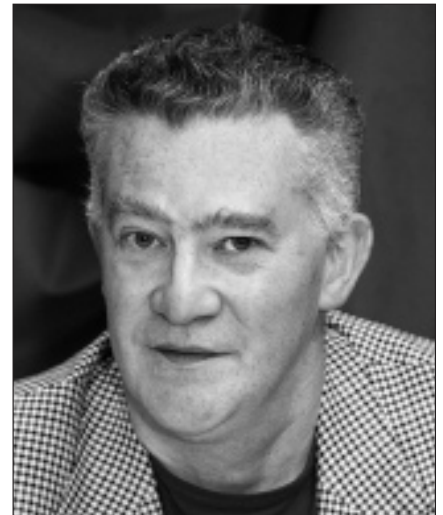
Conclusions

MSD risks are nothing new. Over time, experts have gained a good understanding of musculo-skeletal disorders and the main tools for eliminating them, or at least preventing their occurrence. However, problems of a financial, socio-economic and cultural nature are associated with the implementation of prevention measures in the field, such as hospital care personnel's mental image of their profession and the deadline-driven nature of work in the transport sector. The specific characteristics of the work can also represent a problem, such as carrying heavy loads in the transport sector and physical and mental strain in the hospital sector.

To improve implementation, what is needed is not new legislation but the creation of implementation grants or schemes for all the relevant functions, and of prevention policies based on giving information and training to all those involved (management, the trade unions and so on). Prevention policies also need to take account of the international dimension of the transport sector. Moreover, in order to be effective, such an approach needs to encompass all aspects of improving occupational health, such as diet, working hours and so on, rather than focusing exclusively on backache at work.

To consult the PowerPoint presentations and the report's conclusions, go to <http://www.beswic.be/topics/rsi/index.html>

Prevent A well-deserved retirement



After many years of collaboration, chemical engineer Willy De Craecker, Prevent's specialist and adviser on all areas relating to chemicals and environmental questions, has retired. In the course of his career, Willy De Craecker has been involved in numerous research and study projects, written numerous articles and publications and answered numerous basic questions. The Prevent team would like to thank him for his contributions, and wishes him a long and enriching retirement.



Event Préventica fair

From 22 to 24 January 2008, Prevent attended the Préventica fair. The institute had its own booth, and ran two highly successful workshops: 'Motivating and communicating with regard to prevention' and 'The prevention of backache in the domestic help sector'.

A competition to test participants' knowledge of ergonomics was also organised. The three winners were:

- Mr Yves Maerckx, prevention adviser at Carrefour Belgium, who won a one-year online subscription;
- Mrs Anne Galet, secretary of the preventive medicine service at the University of Lille 2, who won a 2008 campaign kit; and
- Mrs Karine Marques, an occupational physician from Paris, who won a one-year subscription to Objectif Prévention.



The questionnaire and responses (French and Dutch) can be viewed at: <http://fr.prevent.be/p/7BSK8U-03>

Publications Brochures on MSDs in the building trades

In the nature of their profession, building sector workers are exposed to the risk of musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs). A series of nine practical brochures has therefore been produced on the subject. They relate to those working as formwork carpenters, machinery operators, roofers, scrap metal merchants, bricklayers, labourers, fitters, crane operators and road workers.

Aimed mainly at the workers themselves, each brochure is around 12 pages long and printed in colour. The text is kept as brief as possible in order to leave more space for illustrations of working conditions in the field.

The first section of each brochure analyses situations which present a back-related risk. These include the handling of loads and postures which involve leaning forwards or rotating, remaining seated for long periods and so-called 'whole body vibrations'. The associated risks are explained, with supporting sketches of the vertebrae. The aim is to make workers aware of the risks inherent in their daily work.

The second section deals with preventive aspects. Various ergonomic solutions are suggested (adapting the height at which loads are stored, using pallet grips or handling aids). Movements and postures which protect the back are shown in numerous photos of situations in the field. The tips emphasise such points as maintaining the natural curves of the spinal column, straddling the load with one's feet, controlled bending of the knees, identifying frontal support and the importance of keeping muscles flexible. Examples of stretching exercises which can be performed at work are given.

The brochures, compiled by a team at Prevent (Jean-Philippe Demaret, Frédéric Gavray, Freddy Willem) are illustrated with pictures showing real working situations. The series is published by the FPS Employment, Work and Social Dialogue with the support of the European Social Fund.

The brochures can be downloaded from the website www.emploi.belgique.be (in the "Publications" section).

Hardcopy versions can also be ordered free of charge from:

Publications Unit, Federal Public Service Employment, Work and Social Dialogue
Rue Ernest Biérot, 1 – 1070 Brussels.

Tel: 02 233 42 14 – Fax: 02 233 42 36 – E-mail: publications@emploi.belgique.be

European Foundation 2008 action plan of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions recently published its 2008 work programme.

2008 is the closing year of the current four-year programme. Accordingly, the report also assesses a number of projects and describes the upcoming steps involved in wrapping up the multiple-year programme. The programme consisted of research into and communication about four themes:

- employment and restructuring exercises
- work/life balance and working conditions
- labour relations and partnership
- social cohesion and quality of life

Activities in connection with the programme have consisted of checking data derived from various surveys, analysing changes, looking for solutions, and communicating and sharing ideas and experiences via conferences, workshops and seminars.

Prevent is the European Foundation's Belgian national liaison office and is responsible for publication distribution, surveys and monitoring activities on the Foundation's behalf. Regular newflashes and articles are issued in Prevent's publications about the results of studies and surveys.

More information: <http://fr.prevent.be/net/net01.nsf/p/FOUNDATION-03>

The Foundation's 2008 work programme is available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0802.htm>

European Week 2007

Two reports and three awareness-raising videos on MSDs

In the context of the European "Lighten the load!" campaign (2007), Prevent published two reports relating to musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs) at the request of the FPS Employment, Work and Social Dialogue. Prevent also devised three awareness-raising videos on the risks of MSDs.

Preventing MSDs

The first report deals with the prevalence of MSDs in Belgium using figures from the European Foundation, SERV, the Fund for Occupational Diseases, INAMI and a certain number of other research reports on this theme. The report describes the general symptoms of MSDs and focuses on the groups specifically at risk (age, sex, sectors and lines of work) and on the different risk factors. The impact of MSDs on absenteeism and work incapacity benefits is also covered. Given that preventive measures are needed to curb the problem of MSDs, a number of Belgian initiatives in this area are also described.

Scientific survey of the issue

The second report offers a scientific survey of the issue of MSDs and their prevention. It describes MSDs and their consequences and outlines the current regulations in this area. It then looks in more detail at the main risk factors and scientific evidence in the area of prevention. It also considers how the problem of MSDs can be dealt with in a general, multidisciplinary and participatory way within companies.

Three awareness-raising videos

In the context of the European "Lighten the load!" campaign, Prevent and the FPS Employment, Work and Social Dialogue have produced three information films about repetitive movements, static positions and back load.



For further information and to view these videos visit: http://www.beswic.be/index_html/msd_short_videos

Brochure Prevent 2008 training courses

A brochure with descriptions of all courses offered by Prevent in 2008 has recently been published. The brochure provides a clear, detailed presentation of the specific approach in the various open and specially adapted courses run by Prevent. It also contains a calendar summarising the courses organised in 2008 and an enrolment form.

The brochure, which is available in a hardcopy version, can also be downloaded from the Prevent website: <http://fr.prevent.be/p/7C7K6X-03>

Prevent is a multidisciplinary institute centred on the prevention of occupational risks through the promotion of the quality of working conditions and the improvement of work organisation. The institute provides support, advice and information for businesses and organisations, such as occupational accident insurers, external prevention and protection services, sectoral organisations, the social partners, the government and other societal actors.

Prevent is dedicated to the development, collection and mobilisation of occupational safety and health knowledge. To this end, the institute carries out research and studies centred on practical experience. In addition, it gathers information and documentation from all over the world. Lastly, the institute contributes actively to the development of regional, national, and international networks in order to exchange information and experience.

The institute transfers its accumulated knowledge using various means such as consulting, disseminating information and documentation, writing and editing publications, developing training programs and carrying out information and awareness campaigns. The institute gives particular attention to the issue of occupational safety and health in SMEs.

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