

A new approach to reduce musculoskeletal disorders

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1. Introduction

The Danish government has agreed on an ambitious working environment strategy towards 2020. The goals include a 25% reduction in work-related accidents, 20% fewer cases of psychosocially strain, and a 20% reduction in overload due to musculoskeletal strain.

The Danish Working Environment Authority (DWEA) contributes to reaching the goals by inspecting the enterprises and providing guidance on how to achieve a healthy and safe workplace.

DWEA experience is that it has a positive effect on the working environment when DWEA issues an improvement notice to the enterprise. Thus DWEA's ability to impose improvement notices is an important tool to reduce Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD).

2. Methods

In these days DWEA investigates how to make more effective inspections. We wish to improve our focus by paying special attention to those sectors that are most exposed to MSD.

In order to identify these sectors, we are carrying out analyses. In the analyses, we compare numerous parameters, for example absenteeism due to sickness, occupational injuries and early retirement. Furthermore, our analyses are based on results from a comprehensive Danish survey that asked 30,000 employees about their working environment.

Furthermore we include the qualitative knowledge we have from DWEA inspectors, social partners and scientist to supplement our quantitative analyses. In the light of our analyses we select three sectors to have special attention in the year to come. The sectors are 'Construction and building completion', 'Home care and residential nursing institutions for children and adults' and 'Basic metals and fabricated metal products and machinery'.

To tighten up our focus additionally the Danish Working Environment Authority has asked: Can a simpler approach to inspection help reduce MSD?

We simplify the approach by asking inspectors to check primarily the working processes that are most likely to cause MSD in the three sectors. We are picking out working processes by analyses and develop tools for inspectors.

3. Results

Inspectors have used the new approach and the tools since 1 May 2014. The effect is measured during 2014 and the provisionally results will be presented at the conference.