

THE DANISH NATIONAL JOB AND BODY CAMPAIGN (DENMARK)

Type of initiative: Information campaign

Timeframe: 2011 onwards

1 Description of the initiative

1.1 Introduction

The Danish Job and Body campaign was initiated in 2011 by the Danish Working Environment Authority (WEA — *Arbejdstilsynet*) in collaboration with researchers from the National Research Centre for the Working Environment. The campaign targeted public sector employees, with the aim of preventing risk factors and addressing the consequences and long-term sickness effects of musculoskeletal pain in the workplace.

1.2 Aim of the initiative

The initiative aimed to raise awareness among public sector employees about work-related musculoskeletal pain, which is one of the main reasons for work disability and sickness absence in this and other sectors.

The motivation for this and other similar interventions came from data gathered during the 2000s showing that many people in Denmark had negative beliefs about pain, movement and work. In 2007, the collective agreement *Kvalitetsreformen 2007* provided the framework needed for the development of the Danish Job and Body campaign. The aim of the campaign was to promote a change in the beliefs of the target group — public sector employees — about musculoskeletal pain and work.

1.3 Organisations involved

The Danish Working Environment Authority (WEA) is an agency under the auspices of the Ministry of Employment. Its tasks include carrying out inspections, drawing up regulation on safety and health at work, and providing information in this area. The Campaign was implemented by WEA in collaboration with the National Research Centre for the Working Environment (NRCWE).

1.4 What was done and how

The WEA developed the Job and Body campaign during the period 2011-2015, in cooperation with researchers from the NRCWE. The campaign was based on research evidence that beliefs related to musculoskeletal pain, movement and work are modifiable and can lead to altered sickness absence behaviour. The information sources for the campaign included knowledge and experience from Danish researchers in the field of musculoskeletal pain and work, Danish reviews on sickness absence, return to work and risk factors related to physically demanding work, lessons learned from previous campaigns in other countries and the book *The Back Pain Revolution*¹.

¹ Waddell, G. (2004, [cited 2017 Feb 8]). *The Back Pain Revolution [Internet]*, 2nd Edition, Churchill Livingstone, Available from: <https://www.elsevier.com/books/the-back-pain-revolution/waddell/978-0-443-07227-7>

The campaign covered risk factors for musculoskeletal pain in the workplace, consequences for workers and long-term sickness absence from work. It had five key messages: (i) stay physically active, even when experiencing musculoskeletal pain; (ii) prevention, not just rehabilitation, is important; (iii) undertake physical exercise; (iv) create a balance between job demands and body capacity; and (v) physical well-being is a shared responsibility and should be managed together in the workplace.

Strategies for the dissemination activities of the campaign were agreed with employers' associations and trade union organisations. The activities included:

- networking with employers' associations and trade union organisations;
- themed sessions with a specialist communications team;
- a campaign tour;
- a mass media campaign.

A variety of materials and tools were developed as part of the campaign:

- the campaign website, www.jobogkrop.dk;
- a dialogue folder for managers and health and safety representatives to facilitate joint identification of challenges and solutions;
- short films promoting the main messages of the campaign;
- a pocket guide for employees containing easy-to-understand information, illustrations and explanations of physical exercises, as well as advice;
- elastic resistance bands for exercise and posters with illustrations of these exercises;
- posters and giveaways promoting the main messages of the campaign;
- a smartphone app providing good advice and videos of physical exercises;
- an easy-to-use survey with six questions to enable workplaces to perform a quick evaluation of physical well-being;
- a catalogue of activities to help plan and implement actions to increase well-being at work.

The target group was public sector workplaces in Denmark, including 21 ministries, 5 regions and 98 municipalities, covering approximately 900,000 employees. The cost of the campaign was DKR 24 million (EUR 3.2 million), which included the work of external consultants and the development of the associated advertisements, materials and announcements.

The campaign's key innovative feature was its focus on a biopsychosocial understanding of pain (i.e. it acknowledged the multiple factors that contribute to pain) and its departure from the traditional approach that addresses only biomechanical risk factors, such as heavy lifting.

1.5 What was achieved

The impact of the campaign on the target group's knowledge and attitudes to musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) was evaluated through a follow-up study in 2014, which showed that 17.3 % of public sector employees were familiar with the campaign. Those who were familiar with the campaign scored 3.7 percentage points higher on knowledge about musculoskeletal pain and work than others. Among those who were aware of the campaign:

- 56 % stated that it had provided them with relevant information on the prevention and management of musculoskeletal pain;
- 60 % felt the campaign had given them useful tools to prevent and manage musculoskeletal pain;
- 37 % stated that their workplace had undertaken activities as a result of the campaign;
- 49 % reported having conversations with other colleagues about prevention and management of musculoskeletal pain following the campaign.

Overall, the effects of the campaign on knowledge and beliefs about musculoskeletal pain and work were found to be 'small to moderate', which was an improvement on the 'none to moderate' effects of previous campaigns. However, the evaluation did not investigate potential changes in health or health behaviour.

The evaluation points out that, in three out of four campaigns (including campaigns in other countries and the Danish campaign), the overall impression is that such campaigns do not affect sickness absence or sickness behaviour. It is assumed that changes in sickness absence outcomes would require greater efforts at national level than a campaign alone.

The authors of the evaluation refer to another study on the roles and interplay of various social behaviour change strategies, including public education, legislation, public health policy and social marketing, in achieving a sustained reduction in the societal burden of back pain. A key message was that legislative and health policy changes should go together with public education to achieve significant societal changes and that efforts to influence individual behaviour should go hand in hand with efforts to influence the behaviour of governments and health policy-makers.

1.6 Success factors and challenges

This initiative had two unique features: first, its multidimensional approach to understanding the relationship between the body, pain and the workplace, which sought behaviour change through better prevention and the promotion of healthy lifestyles; second, the use of a broad range of communication tools to convert scientific data on MSDs into user-friendly and widely accessible messages.

One of the challenges (for this and similar interventions) is achieving a significant and cost-effective impact. Thus, while these types of campaigns may increase knowledge and change beliefs, it is difficult to measure their impact on health outcomes.

1.7 Transferability

The initiative is transferable to other countries, in terms of both the approach — the biopsychosocial understanding of pain — and the variety of communication tools used to convey the messages.

2 Background

Data from the Eurostat Labour Force Survey ad hoc modules show that, in the 5 years from 2007 to 2013, the percentage of workers in Denmark reporting some form of MSD remained essentially unchanged, falling from 59.0 % to 57.9%, compared with an overall EU increase from 54.2 % to 60.1 % in the same period.

National legislation in Denmark implementing the provisions of the Manual Handling Directive and the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Directive is complex, as the regulation of occupational safety and health is shared among four ministries, with separate legal acts for offshore work in relation to mineral extraction industries, shipping and fishing, and civil aviation, as well as provisions for general industry. The national provisions on manual handling generally mirror those in the directive, although their scope is broader (e.g. they encompass work in employers' private dwellings). There are no additional requirements in relation to the implementation of the DSE Directive.

Psychosocial risks are increasingly recognised as a contributory factor in respect of work-related MSDs. In Denmark, psychosocial risks are covered by the employer's general duty to ensure that working conditions are safe and do not present a risk to health. There are legal provisions in the Danish Working Environment Act, specifically in Executive Order No 559 of 17 June 2004 on the Performance of Work, that refer to psychosocial working conditions; mental health; bullying, including sexual harassment; and the employer's obligation to ensure that work does not involve a risk of harm to mental health. The psychosocial work environment has also been identified as one of the priority areas in the Danish strategy for the working environment, alongside MSDs and accidents at work.

References and resources

- (1) Danish Working Environment Information Centre, 'Job & Body campaign':
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9ghQlc7TLM>
- (2) Danish Working Environment Information Centre, Job and Body campaign website:
<http://www.arbejdsmiljoviden.dk/Emner/Fysisk-arbejdsmiljoe/MSB>

- (3) Andersen, L.L., Geisle, N. and Knudsen, B., 'Can beliefs about musculoskeletal pain and work be changed at the national level? Prospective evaluation of the Danish national Job and Body campaign', Scand J Work Environ Health Online, 2017, available at: http://www.sjweh.fi/show_abstract.php?abstract_id=3692

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