

‘FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE WORKERS FREE FROM MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS’ – AN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Introduction

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are a significant problem in Spain, accounting for 30%¹ of occupational accidents in general and more than 60% in the health and social care (HeSCare) sector.² In addition, 80% of reported occupational diseases are related to MSDs.³ Between 2018 and 2020, the incidence rates of occupational accidents in the HeSCare sector was 1.7 times the average when compared to all sectors in the economy.⁴ This situation has a major economic and social impact, as many potentially healthy workers leave the labour market due to these disorders.

An awareness campaign — ‘For health and social care workers free from MSDs’⁵ — is one of the actions promoted by the MSDs group of the National Commission for Safety and Health at Work (CNSST),⁶ which was conducted by the National Institute for Safety and Health at Work (INSST).⁷ This plan was carried out in March 2022, with the main objectives being the prevention of MSDs and raising awareness of the importance of proper patient handling and transfer, particularly in the residential care sector.

This case study is part of a research project⁸ carried out with the aim to provide an overview of research on work-related musculoskeletal (MSK) risk factors and MSK health in the HeSCare sector.

Description of the case

Aim

The main objective of the awareness campaign ‘For health and social care workers free from MSDs’ was to raise awareness and educate all relevant stakeholders involved (employers, workers and prevention services) regarding the need to adopt preventive measures when performing tasks to care for dependent persons (within the sector NACE 87 - Residential Care Activities) to avoid physical overload and, in particular, the development of MSDs. The secondary objectives were to:

- provide information to ensure that appropriate measures are taken;
- promote healthy behaviours and habits in the workplace;
- enable the identification and correction of poor postural habits; and
- promote good practices.

¹ Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social. (2022). *Estadística de accidentes de trabajo*. A. Accidentes de trabajo con baja y recaída. Principales resultados. [En línea]. <https://www.mites.gob.es/estadisticas/eat/welcome.htm>

² Instituto Nacional de Seguridad y Salud en el Trabajo (INSST), O.A., M.P. (2022). *Informe de siniestralidad en asistencia en establecimientos residenciales*. <https://www.insst.es/documents/94886/376820/FINAL+-+En+linea+-+Informe+de+siniestralidad+en+establecimientos+residenciales+-+22-09-2022.pdf/a041f41a-e0c8-a711-988a-ae16c8039e99?t=1663934808377>

³ Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones. *Informes. Evolución de los partes comunicados distribuidos por grupos de enfermedad. Total, con baja y sin baja. Número y variación interanual. Años 2010-2024* https://www.seq-social.es/wps/wcm/connect/wss/ddd56c95-4f96-4005-878c-dcfdb4345df5/Tabla+27.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=linktext&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE_Z18_2G50H38209D640QTQ57OVB2000-ddd56c95-4f96-4005-878c-dcfdb4345df5-pq1wsXh

⁴ Instituto Nacional de Seguridad y Salud en el Trabajo (INSST), O.A., M.P. (2022). *Informe de siniestralidad en asistencia en establecimientos residenciales*. <https://www.insst.es/documents/94886/376820/FINAL+-+En+linea+-+Informe+de+siniestralidad+en+establecimientos+residenciales+-+22-09-2022.pdf/a041f41a-e0c8-a711-988a-ae16c8039e99?t=1663934808377>

⁵ See: <https://www.insst.es/sin-trastornos-musculoesqueletico>

⁶ See: <https://www.insst.es/cnsst>

⁷ See: <https://www.insst.es/el-instituto>

⁸ The full report is available at: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/musculoskeletal-health-and-risk-factors-hescare-sector-review-existing-information>

What was done and how

Preparation of the plan

Around 60% of people with work-related health problems consider MSDs to be their main ailment.⁹ This is confirmed by the incidence rates of overexertion-related injuries and occupational diseases. Specifically, 87% of occupational diseases in Spain are due to MSDs.¹⁰ Due to the magnitude of the problem, all economic sectors could have been targeted by the awareness plan. However, it was necessary to select one in particular. To this end, the work of the MSDs group of the CNSST was key.¹¹ This group, established in 2011, has developed various actions based on evolving needs, and in 2018, it was decided that an action plan should be launched.

To select the sector, an analysis was conducted to identify sectors with the highest incidence of overexertion-related injuries and high employment rates covered by workplace accident insurance. This study determined that the 'residential care activities' sector (NACE 87) should be prioritised for the plan.

In 2022, a report from the Spanish Working Conditions Observatory (OECT) studied in detail accidents at work that occurred when providing assistance in residential care establishments.¹² The opportunity arose to carry out an awareness-raising campaign aimed at the residential care sector, targeting the three key players: employers, workers and prevention services.

Focus on the residential care sector

In 2021, the residential care sector reported 2,633 occupational accidents due to the physical handling of patients. There is a high percentage of women working in the sector, with women accounting for 90.8% of accidents due to overexertion. Moreover, accidents increase with age, especially with workers between 55 and 64 years of age¹³. With the ageing of the Spanish population, there will be an increasing number of older workers. Therefore, another key point of the awareness campaign was to convey a message applicable to all ages. Since the damage is cumulative, it is considered essential to adopt preventive measures from the beginning of working life.

Campaign material¹⁴

The residential care sector is unique for its emphasis on compassionate, person-centred care, ensuring dignity and wellbeing for those it serves, and it involves caring for people who require specialised attention. The plan sought to link occupational safety and health with the improvement of the service and safety of the residents, centred around the message: 'take care to take better care'.

The campaign material was developed for each of the key actors using an adaptation of the central message. The message for employers was *take care to take better care*, while the message for workers was *take care of yourself to take better care* and the message for prevention services was *we take care to take better care*. Beyond raising awareness, another important objective was to involve everyone and provide criteria and information tailored to each of these roles.

⁹ Instituto Nacional de Seguridad y Salud en el Trabajo (INSST), O.A., M.P. (2022). *Informe de siniestralidad en asistencia en establecimientos residenciales*. <https://www.insst.es/documents/94886/376820/FINAL+-+En+linea+-+Informe+de+siniestralidad+en+establecimientos+residenciales+-+22-09-2022.pdf/a041f41a-e0c8-a711-988a-ae16c8039e99?t=1663934808377>

¹⁰ Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones. *Informes...Evolución de los partes comunicados distribuidos por grupos de enfermedad. Total, con baja y sin baja. Número y variación interanual. Años 2010-2024* <https://www.seg-social.es/wps/portal/wss/internet/EstadisticasPresu> https://www.seg-social.es/wps/wcm/connect/wss/ddd56c95-4f96-4005-878c-dcfdb4345df5/Tabla+27.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=linktext&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18_2G50H38209D640QTQ57OVB2000-ddd56c95-4f96-4005-878c-dcfdb4345df5-pq1wsXh

¹¹ The CNSST working groups include representatives of the General State Administration, Autonomous Communities, employers organisations and trade unions. This consensual approach makes it possible to enrich the measures adopted and increase their social and preventive value.

¹² See: <https://www.insst.es/documentacion/material-tecnico/documentos-tecnicos/informe-siniestralidad-en-establecimientos-residenciales-ano-2022>

¹³ Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social. (2021). *Informe anual de accidentes de trabajo en España*. <https://www.insst.es/documents/94886/0/Informe+anual+de+accidentes+de+trabajo+en+Espa%C3%B1a+2021.pdf/aaf6aad0-6f07-7a37-b829-d691acbcf54e?t=1664536373485>

¹⁴ See: <https://www.insst.es/sin-trastornos-musculosqueletico>

The awareness campaign was carried out between 14 and 17 March 2022 and was also aligned with EU-OSHA's pan-European campaign 'Healthy Workplaces: Let's lighten the load' 2020-2022.¹⁵

The campaign was carried out in different media and using different resources:

▪ Videos

During this period, four videos were launched, one framed in a general context,¹⁶ and three others with messages addressed to each key actor:

- employer¹⁷
- worker¹⁸
- prevention service¹⁹

▪ Posters

The posters were also tailored to each of the key actors. However, it was considered interesting to include a reference to the other key actors in each of the posters in order to provide a global vision. A novel aspect was the inclusion of a QR code, which leads to additional information for each target group.



These posters were available in PDF and in paper format. In the case of the latter, they were made available to their networks by the various members of the CNSST working group.

▪ Documents

The documents offer specific and targeted information for each participant and detail the best prevention practices for each actor.

▪ Tips

There are nine tips aimed at the different participants: they range from planning activities, different forms of mobilisation and support products to specific tips for the employer and members of the prevention service.

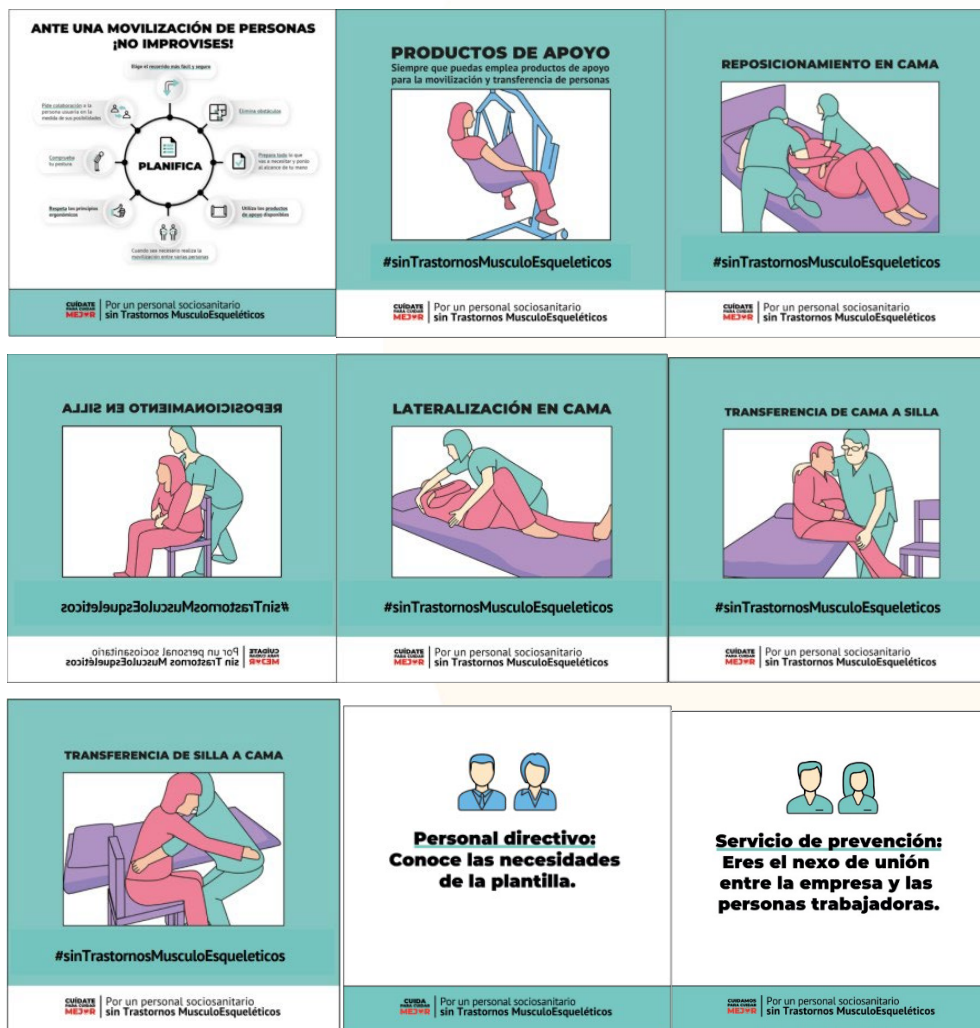
¹⁵ EU-OSHA, 2020-22: Healthy Workplaces Lighten the Load: <https://healthy-workplaces.osha.europa.eu/en/previous-campaigns/musculoskeletal-disorders-2020-22/campaign-summary>

¹⁶ Please see the following link for the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85SSNggirY8>

¹⁷ Please see the following link for the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjJlJoujOQo>

¹⁸ Please see the following link for the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKYEa7wPr34>

¹⁹ Please see the following link for the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjJlJoujOQo>



Source : <https://www.insst.es/sin-trastornos-musculoesqueletico>

■ GIFs

This material allows you to visualise the handling techniques step by step (corresponding to the six previous tips related to patient-handling situations).



Graphics

This material, based on figures, supports the importance of adopting the measures recommended in this plan.



Communication plan:

Different means of communication were used:

Sending information via email

Dissemination was carried out in two stages: During the first stage the email was sent to the institutions and prevention services and so on provided by the members of the CNSST MSDs group. A second round of *emailing*, sent in the middle of the campaign, was mainly addressed to residential care homes.

In the first stage, 57.7% of the target personnel opened the email and 28.87% interacted. In total, the information was accessed a total of 2,326 times. In the second mailing, 40% of the residential care homes that received the email opened it and a high percentage interacted with the content (downloaded it and accessed the *microsite*). This means that the subject matter was of interest to those for whom the newsletter was intended. In this case, the information was read 262 times.

X/Twitter

Through this channel, 24,813 impressions²⁰ were achieved, of which 1,967 generated an interaction.

LinkedIn

Two types of strategies were implemented on LinkedIn. Firstly, graphics, videos and tips were posted as advertisements. Secondly, a paid media campaign was carried out, where the objective was to direct the information to people who might be interested in the sector. To this end, three advertisements were carried out: an advertisement for the employer, an advertisement for the worker, and an advertisement for the prevention service.

Of the 346,000 people employed in the sector, the information reached 89,396 persons through this channel alone.

YouTube

The following table provides the viewing figures from YouTube, based on stakeholder type:

²⁰ Impressions are the number of times a post is seen on the platform.

YouTube views	14-28 March	2 months later	5 months later
Employers	318	524	655
Workers	436	665	784
Prevention Services	338	520	599

What was achieved?

The results of the dissemination campaign, through the different media channels were:

- email: 3,016 people
- X/Twitter: 24,813 people
- LinkedIn: 89,396 people
- YouTube: 3,471 people
- web page: 10,644 people

It should be taken into account that many people who directly received the campaign information later redirected it to other potential stakeholders. In this case, it is not possible to know the exact number of people who received the awareness campaign message.

The aim of the campaign was not only to raise awareness, but also to produce a series of materials with information and useful elements that could be used after the campaign as practical resources for the management, as well as the adoption of measures by employers, workers and prevention services in the sector. It can be seen that 68% of the video views on *YouTube* occurred after the campaign period, with a total of 3,471 views.

Following the awareness campaign, the material was disseminated at several events, among which the following are worth mentioning:

- Technical Day of the European Week²¹ 'Lighten the load in each sector of activity' (27 October 2022), during which the campaign was presented.
- II International Congress and XV National Congress of Occupational Risk Prevention Services in the Health Care Sector (16, 17 and 18 November 2022). *Awareness Plan on MSDs in the Health Care Sector*.
- V International Congress on Safety and Health at Work (24 and 25 April 2023) OSALAN,²² at which the round table *Actions of the administrations for the prevention of ergonomic risks: national commission - European campaign - autonomous communities* was presented.
- Pre-congress conference Preveras 2023 *Caring for those who care (patient handling in the HeSCare sector)*.²³

In addition, the Awareness Plan has allowed the INSST to continue working in this sector. In 2024, the document '**NTP 1197: Minor aids for the patient handling and transfer in the HeSCare sector**'²⁴

²¹ INSST (2022). *Jornada Técnica de la Semana Europea: Relajemos las cargas en cada sector de actividad*. <https://www.insst.es/formacion/sscc-madrid/jornada-tecnica-semana-europea-relajemos-las-cargas-en-cada-sector-de-actividad>

²² See: <https://osalancongress.com/>

²³ See: <https://congreso.preveras.org/portada-2023/>

²⁴ INSST (2024). *NTP 1197: Ayudas menores para la movilización y transferencia de personas en los ámbitos sanitario y sociosanitario - Año 2024*. Instituto Nacional de Seguridad y Salud en el Trabajo. <https://www.insst.es/documentacion/coleccion-tecnicas-de-prevencion/37-serie-ntp-numeros-1191-a-1214-ano-2024/ntp-1197-ayudas-menores-para-movilizacion-y-transferencia-de-personas-en-ambitos-sanitario-y-sociosanitario-2024>

was published, and the update of the '**Technical guide for the evaluation and prevention of risks related to the manual handling of loads**'²⁵ included aspects related to patient handling and transfer.

'We are currently conducting a research project in the sector that aims to link practical training on the patient handling and transfer with behavioural changes that will reduce the accident rate related to this task. In short, the Awareness campaign "For health and social care workers free from MSDs" was the impetus to work in a sector with great need and we continue to work,' explains the Director of the Training, Ergonomics and Psychosociology Department at INSST.

Success factors and challenges

A key aspect of this awareness campaign is that the material is new and available for use at any time. In fact, looking at the video data, more than half of the videos have been viewed outside the campaign period. The success of the plan can be explained because the goal was to connect with the target audience using an adapted language, fostering empathy and inclusion in the search for solutions. The messages were specifically designed to engage people in a proactive and positive manner. However, limited time and resources restricted the campaign's reach, making it difficult to engage a larger number of residential care homes.

According to the Director of the Training, Ergonomics and Psychosociology Department at INSST, this awareness campaign is just one step among many needed to reduce occupational accidents and diseases. It is crucial to continue developing studies, tools and strategies to improve workstation design and facilitate a smooth return to work under optimal conditions. Additionally, organisational measures better suited to the sector's needs must be implemented.

Transferability to other EU Member States

This plan is fully transferable to other countries, as the sector continues to grow across all Member States due to the ageing population. One of the key strengths of this campaign was the forum in which it was promoted — a space where consensus was sought among social partners and public administrations. Other Member States could adopt a similar approach to strengthen their initiatives.

In Spain, after reaching an agreement on the targeted sector, a specific risk was identified while acknowledging the remaining risks. In this case, the main focus was on patient handling and transfer. When adapting a similar campaign to other Member States, it is essential to first identify the particular issue to focus on in order to avoid spreading efforts too thinly, and concentrate on a single key aspect while keeping a clear target audience in mind.

For instance, in Spain, it was observed that 'minor aids' — simple and inexpensive tools that assist in handling patients — were not widely known in the sector. This issue was highlighted both during and after the campaign. Additionally, it seems very important to tailor the communication channels to the different stakeholders (employers, workers, prevention services) as well as the timing of the message dissemination in order to maximise effectiveness.

This approach of the campaign is also easily transferable to other sectors of activity. Likewise, in sectors with fewer workers, a different approach will be needed to address the problem.

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²⁵ INSST (2024). *Guía técnica para la evaluación y prevención de los riesgos relativos a la manipulación manual de cargas* - Año 2024. <https://www.insst.es/documentacion/material-normativo/guia-tecnica-para-la-evaluacion-y-prevencion-de-los-riesgos-relativos-a-la-manipulacion-manual-de-cargas>

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In this case study, interviews were carried out with the Director of the Training, Ergonomics and Psychosociology Department at the INSST.

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