

S Hollmann et al. Work and Stress. March (2001) Vol. 15#1 p. 29.

The interplay between stress and musculoskeletal disorders continues to attract research attention. Combating stress is not straightforward.

This paper reports an investigation into the effects of increasing employee control over their work in order to balance out other stressors and uses reports of pain and associated work restrictions as the outcome variables.

Work load (static load, handling, posture vibration) and poor psychosocial conditions (monotony, time pressure, high perceived work load, low control and low support) are supposed to be predictive of msk problems.

431 staff in a nursing home were surveyed.

Job control was defined as control over method and timing.

Problems (work restrictions) were defined according to Nordic Qr. in the 12 months and the 7 days prior to asking.

Gender, age, tenure and part time work were considered as confounders.

43% participation rate was obtained.

No correlation was found between confounders and pain/work-restriction outcomes.

Age and tenure were correlated just as much as age and msk complaints.

Demands and physical workload were weakly correlated, as were demands and msk complaints.

Control was weakly anti-correlated with physical work load and msk complaints. I.e. job control was weakly protective against reported physical workload and reported msk complaints.

Comment

In spite of the clear potential for bias, the authors conclude that job control can be effective in combating stressors (as measured by aches and pains). It is not clear from these results if this is because of reduced physical work or because of reduced stress or reduced reporting.

