

Produzione del mobile imbottito: un progetto di ricerca finalizzato alla prevenzione delle patologie da sovraccarico biomeccanico degli arti superiori. Presentazione delle caratteristiche del comparto

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KEY WORDS

Musculoskeletal disorders; upper limb; upholstered furniture industry

SUMMARY

«Manufacture of upholstered furniture and work-related upper limb musculoskeletal disorders: an industrial sector prevention project». **Background:** In cooperation with the IRCCS Fondazione Maugeri and the IRCCS Fondazione Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico – EPM-CEMOC, of Milan, the Local Health Unit in Bari, Italy carried out a research project, sponsored partly by the Italian Ministry of Health, on upper limb work-related musculoskeletal disorders (UL-WMSDs) in a specific manufacturing sector, the upholstered furniture industry. This “sofa district” is widely represented with approximately 14.000 workers and 500 factories over a wide geographic area of southern Italy. Advanced technology in the manufacturing process is combined with workers performing intensive arm-hand tasks. **Objectives:** The aim of the study included: a) assessment of exposure to repetitive strain and movements of the upper limb in a representative sample of the factories using the OCRA method, b) analysis of the annual prevalence and incidence rates, c) definition of possible improvement via ergonomic solutions in the various factories. **Methods:** Via a network of occupational physicians a total of more than 6000 subjects were examined over a 5-year period. Case-definition was assessed through standardized procedures. **Results:** A detailed description of the manufacturing process of the upholstered furniture industry and of the characteristics of the working population is provided. Exposed groups at risk were: filling preparation workers, leather-cutting operators, sewing and upholstery-assembly workers. **Conclusions:** Data collected in private companies of different size in this extensive industrial “sofa area” emphasize the importance of prevention through adequate ergonomic solutions and the need to improve training programmes covering the whole area