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Focus Group

Company: Larvik Municipality

Participants: Four female employees who work in administration at accounting, payroll and scheduling.

Basic concern:

“to specify the office employee’s needs and ideas on current gaps in workspace for coping with neck-pain”.

The key-points that have been investigated are:

1. What is the biggest problem with neck pain? To what extent does it affect your daily life?

Women (3): The pains come on suddenly when I work with the computer. It starts in the neck and radiates outward in shoulders...

Women (2): There is a correlation between neck, shoulder and up to the head. It tightens when it goes to the head, tightens around the shoulder blade and upper body. Tightens properly. (*Woman shows with body gestures how it feels*).

2. What is the cause of the pain?

Woman (3): I have had shoulder surgery, improved after that. But when job by PC, it works and stings..

Woman (1): Not chronic pain, they came after a car accident in the 80s and are stress related, also affected by tinnitus. I do yoga.

Woman (4): After overload at the gym about 15 years ago I got pain. The program consisted of 60 min (aerobic) with jumping, got inflammation of the neck and shoulders over time

Woman (2): I have had pain for a long period, it came after rehabilitation after surgery, was worse then. Goes to physiotherapy 1 hour per week, I keep the pain somewhat on track. Work more than 100%. Stress makes it worse.

Woman (3): Got problems 15 years ago. From 2012/13 I was on sick leave. Then I got surgery. The doctor took some of the biceps to gain more space. Today I work only 40%. Have a lot of pain. I was first better after surgery, currently worse.

3. Ways of dealing with the problem (prevent or cope with neck-pain) on site?

W(2): I receive health treatment, massage and ultrasound by a physiotherapist, to relieve tightened neckpain.

4. Need for appropriate exercise at workspace in parallel with management of stress onsite.

W(3) In principle we should take five minutes break, but that is what we should have done. I should have been better to take small breaks. During the first time after the surgery I had a clock that made a sound every hour to remind me of taking a break. Previously I had a "green prescription". I am not physically active at the moment, but my desire would be to have adapted physical activity at the workplace.

W(2): I prefer training in groups, E.g. one p.m. because everybody is pushed to carry out the training and taking part is more legitimated.

W(3): I was on a sick leave fully for two years, following one year where I was partly working and partly still on sick leave.

W(1) : I don't know what came first the tinnitus or the neck-shoulder pain. I'm also partly dizzy from time to time. I do work but I'm on sick leave for about 20%, previously I was on sick leave for 40%. I am physically active, do go for walks and use the "green prescription" to go for walks in the mornings before work starts.

W(3): I used to train with the physiotherapist after the surgery. For the moment I'm not training, I know I should. I am the only one to blame for not training.

W(1): I find it difficult to train after work, it is much better with the «green prescription» to be able to train in the mornings.

W(2): I have not been on sick leave.

W(4) : I have not been on a sick leave, but have acupuncture once a week. Time limits and heavy work load stresses us, controls our days, and affects our trainings (we don't have time).

W(3): I have too much pressure at work – which means that I'm not training.

5. Are your companies members of the "Including Working Life" agreement?

W(3) Yes we are.

6. Preventive work? Exercise? Physical exercise? What kind activities do you prefer?

W(1): I would very much like to have the «green prescription» back. I had a training program specifically prepared for me at the training center. Strength training helps. Also I like a lot of strength training and a little bit of condition training. I used to follow up the training programs, but know it's more on and off.

W(3): I work five hours three times a week, I don't train even though I know I should. My job is enough for me.

W(4): Strength training is good for me, specifically when it's prepared in a program.

W(3): that would have been good for me as well. I should have worked with strength training earlier.

W(2): I would have gone for a walk or I would have taken a swim, just totally relaxed. I'm sorry that they stopped offering "green prescription" (because of misuse) as it did help prevent pain.

W(1): Some people went for a walk, but a lot of people misused the concept and came in late for work. I would have liked to have someone prepare my training sessions.

6. Are you familiar with the word flexibility (training)

W(3): It's all about moving, like an elastic.

W(1): We need to do a little bit of stretching, we are not good enough at this.

W(3): I got a program at the «Cost hospital» (Muscle-skeleton clinic) after my surgery. I only used when I was there.

W(1): I do yoga every Tuesday night, we are three friends that make each other go.

7. What is stress?

W(2): Stress is all about time limits and pressure. It often results in the tightening of the neck and causes headache. I am trying to take breaks but keep stressing to receive my working goals. We don't have enough staff.

W(4): I also have head-aches and shoulder pains.

W(2): Me too.

8. How do you sleep at night?

W(3): I sleep really bad because of my hip.

W(4) I sleep badly too. I sleep in easily, but wake up after one hour. Then I tend to wake up every tenth minute throughout the night. I have also become intolerant to food, which probably is caused by stress.

W(3): I sleep well in periods. It is worse in connection to tinnitus, which comes and goes.

W(2): I tend to sleep, and sleep well.

9. Do you do exercises in relation to stress?

W(1): I do yoga at work, through HES. We had a program that we got tired of. This was partly ran by us. Following exercises from a monitor in a meeting room. We should have been given a new program. The program we followed lasted more than half a year about 15 minutes with the same exercises every time. We were 13 people taking part of the program, 12 women and one man.

W(4): I do meditation and I am physically active.

W(1): I prefer to have an instructor. It is easier to follow a program supported by music.

W(2): I don't want to exercise in the open office landscape, when the other people are watching if a message would pop up as reminder on my computer. It would be easier to take part if all the employees would get the reminder at the same time. Also it should be carried out in a separate room.

10.

10. WHAT ARENAES USUALLY CAUSES COMPLICATIONS OR PAINS? ANYTHING IN YOUR HOME ENVIRONMENT, THAT IS ONNECTED TO PAIN?

W (3) – I pass on the responsibility for housework to my husband.. He vacuum cleans and do the laundry.

2 – Putting the laundry up is the worst thing. My son does that.

1 – Yes, putting up the laundry is the worst.

11. WHAT MAY CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVE YOUR SITUATION?

W (4) – All kinds of movements make me better...also housework

W (3) – We have to be more considerate about our posture. We have to lift our heads and tighten our chest. At the workplace we sit in the wrong position and sit in the same position without moving for too long.

W (4) – I agree with you!

W (3) – I do have some limitations with regard to stretching and bending. It itches and gives me a kind of burning feeling.

W (1) – I do whatever I can manage. Some exercises tend to hurt right at the moment, but seem to feel good short time after.

12. HOLIDAYS AND LEISURE TIME. DO YOU HAVE ANY LIMITATIONS AS FAR AS HOLIDAYS OR LEISURE TIME IS CONCERNED?

W (2) – We do what we want to do

W (3) – I would have liked to go biking a bit more often, but at least I am trying.

W (4) – If I were to bike a lot I would have to put the steering position higher or adjust it to my body.

W (1) – Yes, my neck hurts when i bend my head backwards in yoga classes.

W (4) –I stopped jumping from the boat to the docks, but still enjoy boat-life. I do have a kayak and like to ski a lot.

W (3) Ski is not good for me!

W (1) – I like to swim in the sea during the summer months.

13. ARE THERE DIFFERENCES EXPERIENCED FROM SUMMER TO WINTER? WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER GOOD MOVEMENTS CONNECTED LEISURE TIME?

W (3) – Swimming is good-it is wonderful!

W (2) –I experience great differences from summer to winter. My neck is much tighter during the winter time.

W (1) The first week of the vacation is usually connected with a lot of pain, then it slowly improves.

14. COPING STRATEGIES

Could you mention some things that would make you feel better?

W (3) – People have to stay well. A lot of people are absent from work, we have too many sick leaves.

W (4) – My desire would be to get the «Green Prescription» back. If that would happen we could train being at work. Adapted physical activity during work-hours would be very nice. 1

W (1) – I agree.

W (2) – I don't have time to practice during the evenings as I have to take on another job, being a mother.

15. WHEN SEPARATING INTO GROUPS, ARE THERE SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS THAT YOU SUGGEST NEED TO BE MADE?

W (3) – A lot of movements would be desired, preferably with an elastic. Simple movements.

16. WHAT TIME DURING THE DAY WOULD BE MOST SUITABLE FOR YOUR TRAINING?

All agree that before lunch is the best time. Good to get some exercises after hours in front of the computer. Then again it depends on the working place.

W (4) – In the morning

W (1) – Agree!

All – Groups with both women and men are best.

W (2) – Information about training sessions must be given good time in advance so that training may be planned and possible meetings may be organized at different times.

17. IS IT IMPORTANT TO GET KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HOW CORRECT TRAINING IS TO BE PERFORMED?

W (3) – We don't want large groups. Smaller groups make it possible to get feedback and to make corrections on the movements and to ask questions about performances.

W (4) – I agree!

W (1) – Group training is very popular, it often gets too many participants. It proves the need for this type of exercise.

18. NEED FOR INTERVENTIONS

W (3) – If the offer to train all of a sudden would appear on my computer, I would feel stupid not to take part.

W (4) – One should be able to go to another room to do the exercises. All of a sudden, it is not the right time after all to do the exercises, or to take part in the offer. It is important that you are able to take part only when you do have the time.

W (2) – It is easier to go through with the program if it is on a set schedule, the same time every day or every week.

W (4) – I prefer actually to go outdoors to do my physical activity, compared to taking 5 minutes every now and then.

W (2) – The every-day pressure is too big.

W (1) – Stress, but some things may wait for a little while. But these things do get stressing from time to time.

19. WHAT ARE YOUR AGES?

W (1) – 1954 (was born in 1954)

W (2) – 1970

W (3) – 1951

W (4) – 1960

20. STRESS/ANXIETY. HOW DO YOU COPE WITH IT? ARE YOU AFRAID OF GETTING MORE PAINS AND NOT BEING ABLE TO DO THINGS THAT YOU ACTUALLY DO LIKE?

W (3) – I don't do a lot about my situation. I am not taking on the responsibility. I do not use to be any better before. I would like to start swimming.

21. WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING IN FIVE YEARS TIME FROM NOW?

W (3) – At that time I have retired and will then begin to swim.

W (1) – Quite a few people swim, it is a beautiful start of the day.

W (4) – I would have liked to get another job, maybe another education, simply do other things in life. Maybe take education to do acupuncture, but I am too old now I think.

W (3) – Previously I thought of getting another job, but not any longer. I will soon be retired.

W (2) – It is out of the question for me

W (1) – I think continuing like now will be ok.

W (3) – I would have had a 100% position in a pre-school setting, was offered 50 % so that was not interesting for me.

W (4) – I worked at the service-center before, but that was really difficult without flexitime.

ALL- Flexitime is «gold.» Compulsory hours from 9-14 and 14-17. We register our presence.

W (2) – Overtime is taken out as free time. I have a lot of meetings during the evenings. At the same time my employee full time work load during the day-time. I am not paid for overtime.

W (4) and W(1) – We are paid for overtime work

W (3) - Approximate sick-leave rate in this municipality is a little above 7%,.....I think!

All – We don't have any knowledge on actions taken to reduce the sick-leave rate.