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PREVENTION OF WORKPLACE MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS BASED ON A STAGE OF CHANGE APPROACH: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM AN INTERVENTION STUDY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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10.1136/oemed-2011-100382.239

Objectives A psychological stage of change (SOC) approach has been suggested as a means of improving the uptake and longevity of interventions to reduce workplace musculoskeletal disorders (WMSD). Tailored interventions based on SOC have been trialled in a range of workplaces in South Australia.

Methods Twenty three companies from various industry sectors were recruited with purposive sampling. Workgroups comprising 10–15 workers were surveyed and randomised to either a SOC-tailored intervention or a standard intervention, based on generic ergonomic advice. Data on worker demographics, musculoskeletal pain and discomfort (MSPD), job satisfaction and safety climate were collected using previously published survey instruments. After 12 months, the workgroups were re-surveyed.

Results For matched participants, the overall prevalence of MSPD increased post-intervention (from 40% to 50%, N=242). Severe pain increased from 14% to 20%. The prevalence of MSPD in the standard group was significantly increased from 41% to 54% whereas in the tailored group it was non-significantly increased from 38% to 46%. The prevalences of severe pain were not significantly increased in both groups. During this period, measures of job satisfaction and safety climate reduced marginally. However, those in the tailored intervention arm had smaller shifts.

Conclusions It is notable that a global economic downturn occurred soon after the baseline survey, and this is likely to have had an impact on the follow-up data. Nevertheless, compared with the standard intervention, there is evidence of benefit from the stage of change approach.