

Summary

The goal of the “Caring” work program was to reduce the frequency and seriousness of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), also taking psychological stress into account, and to promote systematic organisation of occupational safety and health (OSH) in care companies. The institutions involved in the program provided prevention offers targeted at managers of care companies and clinics as well as multipliers.

The prevention mix included an on-line self-assessment tool for in-patient and out-patient care and care in clinics, regional information events, training of senior management and multipliers by social accident insurance institutions and on-site visits for monitoring and advisory purposes. These measures were accompanied by a communication campaign under the title of “gesund-pflegen-online.de”.

The aim was to evaluate the current status and development of OSH in the sub-sectors in question – in-patient and out-patient care and care in clinics – and examine the suitability of prevention and OSH-measures.

Current status and development of OSH: selected results

Care providers in the three sub-sectors concerned have achieved good overall results in the **prevention of MSDs**. However, in terms of fulfilment of all the requirements made by the sponsors of the Joint German OSH Strategy (GDA), it was found that many care companies have not so far developed suitable strategies for systematically reducing MSDs across the board. In particular there is a lack of appropriate plans in all sub-sectors. The coordination committee for the “Caring” program therefore recommends that a uniform understanding of suitable concepts for across-the-board, systematic prevention and protection against MSDs should be developed and incorporated more closely into future discussions amongst care providers.

As far as **working time legislation** is concerned, companies themselves and the inspectors stated that the statutory requirements were largely or fully met.

When it comes to **prevention of psychological stress**, managers stated that appropriate activities were undertaken, and inspectors largely confirmed this. In companies that had taken part in the on-line self-assessment, managers also stated that stress symptoms only occurred to a limited extent. However, other research reports in which employees were surveyed do not come to such positive conclusions.

The sponsors of the Joint German OSH Strategy see a need for further action on psychological stress, as managers and other responsible people in companies attach great importance to this issue and prevention/OSH-measures on MSDs and psychological stress are mutually reinforcing.

When it comes to the **organization of OSH and risk assessment**, the performance of care companies varies. The results for in-patient and out-patient care leave clear room for improvement, whereas for clinics they are good. In in-patient and out-patient care there was, in particular, evidence of shortcomings in the use of the safety and health committee. In all three sub-sectors there were, to varying extents,

shortcomings in terms of completeness and a systematic approach to risk assessment. The coordination committee for the “Caring” program therefore recommends that future activities should be focused on these aspects in particular.

Final assessment and recommendations

The “Caring” work program has largely achieved its aims, and the mix of measures has enabled it to reach a large proportion of care companies, raising awareness amongst them and achieving tangible improvements. In addition to inspections, on-line self-assessment for in-patient and out-patient care and regional information events have proved in particular to be appropriate and effective prevention instruments.

Companies taking part several times in the on-line self-assessment have significantly improved in terms of the shortcomings identified in the field of MSDs. Use of the on-line self-assessment tool has thus effectively improved situational MSD prevention.

At all levels the “Caring” work program has been distinguished by the commitment and cooperation displayed by the institutions involved – the German federal government, federal states and social accident insurance institutions. Sustainability of the offers developed should be adequately taken into account in day-to-day operations and in the new Joint German OSH-strategy. The coordination committee for the “Caring” work program therefore recommends that

- the current mix of preventive activities (combination of instruments and OSH offers) should be continued,
- on-line instruments (in-patient and out-patient care and care in clinics) should be continued and expanded,
- a uniform understanding of suitable concepts for across-the-board, systematic prevention and protection against MSDs should be developed,
- the topic of psychological stress should continue to be an important focus of attention,
- collaboration with the sponsors of the Joint German OSH Strategy (GDA) for the care sector should continue,
- there should be a more intensive provision of advice to companies on systematic occupational safety and health protection.