



**World
Physiotherapy**
Europe region

**Report - Cross Working Group on
Musculoskeletal Disorders
2020 – 2022**

**Musculoskeletal Disorders Cross Working Group
(MSD Cross WG)**

FOR NOTING

19th and 20th May 2022

Prague, Czech Republic

**REPORT - CROSS WORKING GROUP ON MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS
2020 – 2022
Europe region
Musculoskeletal Disorders Cross Working Group (MSD Cross WG)**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) was one of two two themes approved by the last General Meeting (2020) to explore through a cross Working Group approach.

The aim was to enhance the promotion, recognition and impact of the profession in the Europe region through focusing on the theme of MSD and the role of physiotherapy from the perspective of each Working Group.

Initially the Working Groups on Advocacy and EU Matters, Education and Professional Practice explored the MSD theme from their respective perspectives. Following this initial work, it was agreed to bring the work together and that the relevant members within the Working Groups would meet and work as a specific Group.

The dates of the meetings are listed in Annex 4 Appendix 4.

2. OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the Cross Working Group on Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD CROSS WG) was to strengthen the recognition of the role of the physiotherapists and physiotherapy in the prevention and treatment of MSD in Europe.

3. GENERAL OVERVIEW

In its first meeting the members of the working group agreed to focus the advocacy and the information actions towards:

- a) physiotherapists as they are the direct links to the patients in their expert roles,
- b) authorities at European and national level,
- c) other healthcare professionals to strengthen a multidisciplinary approach including physiotherapy,
- d) higher education institutions to convey the message that physiotherapy is cost effective in this area,
- e) patient organisations to listen to the needs and incorporate priorities from a patient perspective,
- f) (social) media.

The planned two-year Health Workplaces campaign by the Occupational Safety and Health Authority of the EU (EU-OSHA), assisted in the rationale for choosing MSD as a cross WG theme.

This WG increased the region's engagement with our EU-OSHA partner. It specifically targeted the different themes of the EU-OSHA 2020-2022 Healthy Workplaces Campaign.

The group worked on three of the six EU-OSHA themes:

- 1) Chronic MSD (April 2021 – June 2021)
- 2) Sedentary work (July 2021 – October 2021)
- 3) Telework (February 2022 – April 2022)

4. INITIATIVES FOR THE TOPIC “CHRONIC MSDS AND SEDENTARY WORK”

The WG explored and worked on the agreed six key messages to deliver:

- 1) Not all Low Back Pain (LBP) needs to be pushed into the medical system – Employers can keep people healthy;
- 2) Ergonomic and postural advice should focus on resilience and adaptability as much as vulnerability and danger;
- 3) Exercise and education as core prevention and managements aspects – leading to self-management, with a healthy lifestyle focus;
- 4) Liaison between healthcare and employer critical to maintaining and returning employees to work;
- 5) Consider psychological and multidisciplinary care as additional care when needed;
- 6) Significant costs and harms with inappropriate imaging and/ or medication.

Members explored the idea of making short videos about different scenarios of neck and back pain among workers and how to deal with them. For this purpose, the WG reached out to the Member Organisations (MOs) through the region’s secretariat to send short videos of exercises. As a result, the WG was able to create two videos. These are available on the region’s YouTube channel. The members of the WG are grateful to the MOs that contributed.

The WG discussed adapting infographics already available on the region’s website. Suggestions also included a paper-based booklet containing virtual and real patient cases aligning stories with the six key messages with additions from selected experts. These ideas were postponed as other work was prioritised. The ideas remain to be developed at a later stage.

The Secretariat led in sending out the key messages through various (social) media channels. The developed materials were circulated to the MOs to be used in the respective countries.

5. INITIATIVES FOR THE TOPIC “TELEWORK”

The WG explored and worked on three key messages to deliver:

- 1) Ergonomic and postural advice should focus on resilience and adaptability as much as vulnerability and danger.
- 2) Exercise and education as core prevention and management aspects – leading to self-management, with a healthy lifestyle focus.
- 3) Consider psychological and multidisciplinary care as additional care when needed.

They also:

- explored the similarities between sedentary work and telework in order to effectively focus on the advocacy of physiotherapists / physiotherapy benefits.
- decided that it was important to highlight the possible impact of physical activity both on physical and the mental wellbeing.
- agreed to raise awareness about the fact that physiotherapy exercises play a role and have great impact on the mental health of individuals.

In prioritising what was achievable, the WG focused on the development of a webinar on the impact of telework on low back pain. The webinar will gather different perspectives from involved stakeholders such as a patient, EU-OSHA, an employer and a physiotherapist. It will

be broadcast live on 20th April 2022. The webinar will provide the region with the opportunity to engage with different stakeholders to promote the importance of physiotherapy.

6. OUTCOMES

- [Video](#) for EU-OSHA campaign Lighten the Load – Sedentary work.
- [Video](#) for EU-OSHA campaign Lighten the load – Chronic MSDs.
- Webinar scheduled for 20th April 2022.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2022-2024

The Working Group recommends to the General Meeting:

- To continue with the MSD theme to progress the work.
- That the collaboration with EU-OSHA would continue. This collaboration ensures a well-established platform and network for the Europe region's advocacy purposes. It enables interaction with different stakeholders such as the European Commission, patient organisations, businesses and other healthcare professionals. The next campaign of EU-OSHA will be on "Safe and healthy work in the digital age". It will focus on effective prevention of occupational safety and health risk factors in the digital world of work.

These recommendations are included in the joint recommendations to the General Meeting.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As Chair, it has been a privilege to work with the members of this Working Group and I extend my sincere thanks to them for their commitments big and small over the past term. I would also like to acknowledge General Secretary, Aitor Carpio for his continued engagement and guidance to this Working Group. My gratitude goes to the secretariat staff for their support.

Tim Németh

Chair of the Cross Working Group on Musculoskeletal Disorders

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