

Review of IOSH Musculoskeletal event March 2020

The event held at Southmead hospital Bristol, comprised of 6 speakers on different aspects of managing Musculoskeletal disorders (MSD's)

Dr Mike Fray (Loughborough University) described the research done on the use of slide sheets concluding that one full size sheet which is a double sheet (2 layers) clearly marked top and bottom with diagram of head and feet to avoid confusion operated by one person is safer than using two persons - given a suitable environment.

Valerie Phillips (St Barts NHS trust) gave use the benefit of research undertaken for St Barts hospital on 'who cares for your hoists?' describing how in a hospital trust poor communication and lack of cooperation to ensure hoists and slings were in safe working order and available was a problem. Valerie had used a tool known as 'Accimap' to look holistically at the issues. An interesting message emerged which was – to define how your safety is working – Look at as many things which are going right rather than focusing on the few which are going wrong.

Sarah Thornton (Kirklees council) had researched using one person to use a hoist – either floor based or a ceiling track hoist in contrast to using two persons for this task. There were a number of positives for this being a one-person task, including the interaction with the service user who said there was more privacy and dignity, the hoist operator focussing more on the task than chatting with a colleague. The overall message was it is safety to use one person to operate a hoist than when two people complete the task, a message which those struggling to cover shifts might look to explore.

Jeni Bryant (Hywel Dda University Health Board) introduced the audience to the All Wales Manual Handling Passport, this is a comprehensive modular process of training and management of manual handling which has been adopted across Wales, Jeni was advocating that England should join in and benefit as Wales has done.

It was clear that a great deal of cooperation and work has been put into this project.

Martin McMahon (HSE) took us through his finding of his time conducting inspections on manual handling operations in the care sector. Woeful cases of policies being out of date, too long, and with no SMART objectives.

Some risk assessments were incomplete or too patient centred, training in some establishments was poorly managed, staff feedback said 40% of training was ineffective and some training was to be done in the employee's own time – which is not acceptable.

However, it was not all negative as there are good practices to be found, Martin underlined the need to look at both behavioural and cultural issues when reviewing your manual handling processes.

Pam Simpson (Physiotherapist) gave an interesting and amusing account of her view of managing MSD's and how keeping moving and possibly keep working is a far better cure than resting and keeping still which was previously thought to be the answer. Pam had found that workplace polices, and training often do not match day to day practice resulting in not moving forward with MSD's.

Many people think having a scan will show where the problem is so treatment can begin, however, the wait for a scan can be lengthy and it appears that less than 5% of scans show the problem, when a good walk can make significant improvements in many cases, reducing waiting list and cost to both the employer and the NHS. Keep moving was the clear message.

Rebecca Brooks National Executive March 2020