

Investing in personnel's musculoskeletal health brought significant savings to University hospital in Oulu

Background

The national programme: Adults on The Move (AMP) aims at influencing the structures and operational cultures in Finland to ensure that the working-age population is physically active.

Early retirements in Finland are most often caused by musculoskeletal disorders (31%) or mental health problems (33%). To tackle this issue, Oulu University Hospital (OYS) implemented a four-year project in 2016 in co-operation with AMP to improve their personnel's musculoskeletal health. The main reason for sick leaves in OYS was musculoskeletal disorders (39%).

Purpose of the project

Purpose of the project to was strengthen the musculoskeletal health to reduce the risks hindering employees' ability to work and the number of sick days. The goal was that the personnel at OYS improve their physical condition to be able to perform well at work, to cope better at work and to retain resources also for their free time.

Methods

In cooperation with their occupational health care provider the OYS strategy was renewed to focus better on proactive measures and early identification of risks for musculoskeletal problems. The operating instructions at OYS were also revised to contain guidelines on how the personnel can improve their musculoskeletal health on their own and lower the number of sick days needed.

Versatile physical activities were provided to support and maintain the personnel's ability to work in good health. Personal guidance and support were available to those who were at risk and wanted to improve their way of life and physical condition. The support and activities were tailored according to the requirements of the job and what is beneficial to the employees performing those jobs.

Results

Employees increased the amount of exercise, lost weight, reduced their stress levels and improved their ability to recover. Sick days resulting from musculoskeletal disorders decreased by more than 2900 days. This lead into savings of 872 400 euros for the year (300 euros/day).

Conclusion

Proactive measures in health and work ability management are now permanent parts of the strategy and financial planning at OYS. The well-established activities and good practices have been continued since the end of the project. Furthermore, the good results from the project have been utilized in 15 other hospital districts through a new project by AMP.