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Implementation of the Manual Handling Directive in the healthcare industry in the European Union for patient handling tasks

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Abstract

In 1990 the European Union (EU) introduced a directive to protect workers against the risks involved in handling heavy loads. This paper reports on a benchmarking exercise to (a) investigate the implementation of the EU Directive on Manual Handling in the healthcare and social care industries and (b) gather expert opinions on the residual problems for patient handling in nine countries in the EU. Baseline data were collected about healthcare and social care systems, funding, implementation of the EU Manual Handling Directive and official patient handling guidance from government and professional organisations. It was found that the directive was implemented between 1992 and 1996 but relatively little research has been carried out to evaluate its impact in the healthcare industry. Only three countries had official national guidance on patient

the healthcare industry. Only three countries had official national guidance on patient handling and there was little supporting research evidence for many of the recommendations. Expert opinions were provided to identify residual patient handling issues and barriers to safer patient handling in each country. These data have provided participating countries with an opportunity to both identify gaps, and work with other EU countries to address common problems.

Relevance to industry

A review of the implementation of the Manual Handling EU Directive for patient handling supports the healthcare industry in calling for a higher priority to be placed on addressing the risks of musculoskeletal problems in nursing staff.



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Keywords

Healthcare; Europe; Legislation; Manual handling; Patient handling

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