**Manual handling of people in the homecare environment**

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Introduction

In 2012 Technical Report ISO/TR12296: Ergonomics- Manual handling of people in the healthcare sector was published. This TR has been brought together by a group of experts in this field with the strong support of the European Panel for Patient Handling Ergonomics and was written under the responsibility of ISO/TC159/SC3 WG 4.

"National and international statistics provide evidence that healthcare staff are subject to some of the highest risks of musculoskeletal disorders (particularly for the spine and shoulder), as compared with other jobs.

Manual patient handling often induces high loads on the musculoskeletal systems, in particular on the lower back. Manual patient handling ought to be avoided where possible or be performed in a low-risk manner.

Factors such as the number, capacity, experience and qualification of caregivers can interact with the following conditions to produce an increased risk of musculoskeletal disorders:

- Number, type and condition of patients to be handled;
- Awkward postures and force exertion;
- Inadequacy (or absence) of equipment;
- Restricted spaces where patients are handled;
- Lack of education and training in caregivers' specific tasks.

An ergonomic approach can have a significant impact on reducing risk from manual patient handling.

A good analysis of work organization, including handling tasks and the above-mentioned risk determinants, is extremely important in reducing risks to caregivers.

The recommendations presented in this Technical Report allow identification of hazards, an estimation of the risk associated with manual patient handling and the application of solutions. They are based primarily on data integration from epidemiological and biomechanical approaches to manual (patient) handling and on the consensus of international experts in patient handling. The assessment and control of risks associated with other aspects of manual handling can be found in ISO 11228-1, ISO 11228-2, ISO 11228-3 and ISO 11226.

ISO/TR 12296 does not include homecare, although elements of the TR can be used within the homecare environment. The ISO/TR 12296 has been presented on several conferences and has a serious impact on Safe Patient Handling and Mobilisation around the globe.

New initiatives

In 2011 the EPPHE group initiated the first work to start investigating the need and acceptance of an extra annex or to propose a completely new TR for the home care environment.

At the 22nd of July 2014 at the Applied Human Factors and Ergonomics Conference in Krakow the homecare project was discussed at the meeting of the International Panel for Patient Handling (in former times EPPHE, now a global network instead of European only). Elly Waaijer (Waaijerconsult, NL) has been appointed to investigate in close cooperation with Nattale Battevi (U.O.C Medicina del Lavoro Dipartimento di Medicina Prevenitiva - Clinica del Lavoro "Luigi Devoto") and Hanneke Knibbe (LOCOMotion) future options for a Technical Report or annex to the existing TR dedicated to the homecare environment. This initiative is discussed in October 2014 in ISO/TC159/SC3 WG 4.

There is a strong need to get this additional work done since around the world homecare is a fast growing industry caring for the elderly and disabled people. Because of that the number of homecare workers is seriously increasing as well. And workload has also its influence on the health of family and friends of the elderly and handicapped people, which has an indirect influence on working forces around the world. Homecare has some extra dimensions in comparison with institutional care; no colleagues close by, Safe Patient Handling and Mobility technology often not developed for home care use, since it is a home for the patient it is not always easy to bring in SPHM technology; decline of patient’s functionality needs rapid change of technology, an issue which is often not easily organized in home care.
A questionnaire is under development to investigate the organizational issues, guidelines, and legislation around the world. This will be sent out spring 2015. In March future work on this subject will be discussed in the next meeting of ISO/TC159/SC3 WG 4. Further activities to take place prior to the IEA conference in August, including a more in depth literature search.

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