

Sabrina Rudolph, “Fit im Forst“ – Conception, Implementation and Evaluation of an Exercise-Oriented Intervention to Compensate Work-Related Physical Strains of Forest Workers in Workplace Health Promotion.

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Outline

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Forest work is a physically demanding activity (and profession) that contains intensive and functional strains with regard to the muscular skeletal and locomotor system.

The occupational category of forest workers, in general, is not affected by physical inactivity or a lack of exercise, which can be found throughout society these days and which is also often rated as a health risk.

That is why it can be said that stereotypical movement patterns are responsible for muscular dysbalances, which in turn can be an aetiological cause for back pain.

Therefore, the aim of this project is to design an academically profound intervention in form of a workplace health promotion programme that will be implemented and evaluated subsequently.

At this point it must be admitted that the designing process had to be adjusted due to several occurring challenges and problems. On the one hand it has to be said that changing conditions, with regard to the timespan of the three-year pilot phase, are almost impossible to control and detect. Moreover, the occupational image of forest workers, as said before, is not affected by physical inactivity or a lack of exercise. Because of that, the intervention measures cannot be seen as a simple extension or connection of already existing preventive health and fitness programmes. On the other hand, the decentralized organization of the intervention group complicated the planning phase as well.

In the course of this work, the general conditions and workplace activities of forest workers were analyzed at first. In the following and on the basis of a biopsychosocial approach, an exercise-oriented intervention for forest workers was designed.

The overall aim of the project is to reduce work-related physical strains of the target group due to an exercise-oriented compensational fitness training, as well as to vitalize and improve specific human health-related resources.

Furthermore, the intervention was implemented in an operational context of a three-year period. In the following, the evaluation process is based on selected motoric and psychosocial parameter as well as an analysis of the sickness absence rate.

In conclusion, the results achieved illustrate the necessity, practicality and direct applicability of a long-term exercise-oriented intervention, even with regard to an occupational image that is characterized by a considerable amount of physical activity.