

Hu-Tech Newsletter no. 23: November 2006

Welcome to our November 2006 newsletter. We've had a busy few months, which has borne fruit in the publication of two high profile research reports for the HSE. Many of you contributed to the 18 month study we were undertaking for HSE concerning MSD case management and rehabilitation, and we are pleased to report that the study is now completed; further information is contained below. We've also completed the study we undertook compiling case studies showing the costs and benefits of ergonomic interventions for those with MSDs. These clearly demonstrated that applying ergonomics in the workplace can be cost effective. Several of the case studies were drawn from work we had undertaken with clients; we'd be pleased to talk with you further about ways you can use ergonomics to save your business money. We are also very pleased to announce the launch of our new web-site: www.hu-tech.co.uk.

Hu-Tech reports for HSE

We reported in our last newsletter that two studies we had been undertaking for HSE were complete, although at the time they were not published on the HSE website. However, they are both now available and can be freely downloaded from:

- The costs and benefits of MSD case management and rehabilitation:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr493.pdf>
The model outlining good practice in this area is contained in Appendix 3 of the report. A pdf of the **abstract and executive summary** are available on our website: www.hu-tech.co.uk (either by following the scrolling bar link or going to the downloads page where it is listed under publications).
- Case studies showing the costs and benefits of ergonomics interventions to tackle MSDs:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr491.htm>
Some of the case studies were drawn from work we have undertaken with our clients.

Andy Nicholson and Margaret Hanson will both be speaking at a one day conference organised by the Ergonomics Society entitled *Ergonomics and Rehabilitation* in Liverpool on 23rd November 2006. Further details from: <http://www.ergonomics.org.uk/page.php?s=6&p=113>

Better Backs 2006

This autumn the HSE are running a national campaign in partnership with Local Authorities to tackle back pain in the workplace. Starting in October 2006, this will build on the success of the Backs! 2005 campaign. The aim is to reduce the incidence of back pain caused or made worse by work, its impact and the number of working days lost due to back pain.

The campaign will promote sensible workplace precautions that reduce the risk of back pain and emphasise the positive benefits of staying active with back pain. A particular focus of this year's campaign will be the holistic approach needed to manage back pain, and the campaign will encourage employers and employees to work together to help people return to normal activities including work.

The findings of two research studies recently completed by Hu-Tech for HSE into cost effective MSD case management, and the case studies demonstrating the costs and benefits of ergonomic interventions for MSDs provide useful material which can help organisations manage these issues. Please contact us if you'd like to discuss these further (margaret.hanson@hu-tech.co.uk).

The HSE plan to use advertising and events to raise awareness of how to reduce and manage the risk of back injury in the workplace, and will also undertake a programme of inspections. You can sign up for information, and to take part in discussions at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/campaigns/index.htm>.

Keyboard shortcuts

It is well recognised that mouse use can contribute to discomfort in the upper limb, due to the small, fine movements, and repetitive clicking which can be required. As an alternative, the use of keyboard short cuts can be particularly helpful in reducing awkward postures and discomfort associated with mouse use. Many commands initiated by the mouse can be undertaken using the keyboard, via shortcuts (pressing a combination of keys). Completing a command using keyboard shortcuts can also be quicker than using the mouse. A summary of the most commonly used keyboard shortcuts is available from our website www.hu-tech.co.uk (news section) and is free to download.

Learning to Touch Type

We were interested to read in The Guardian recently of the possibility of touch typing classes being included in the national curriculum. Already this vital keyboard skill is taught in schools in the USA and a small number of other European countries. Hu-Tech have long been advocating the benefits of being able to touch type, as we frequently see DSE users who lean forwards and look down at the keyboard because they cannot touch type. Often this results in discomfort in the neck, upper back and shoulders.

Being able to touch type not only increases the speed and accuracy with which you are able to type, but also helps to reduce the likelihood of discomfort. Keyboards will be with us for many years to come, and the improved posture that results from being able to touch type can help prevent discomfort.

New HSE guidance on shiftwork

Approximately 3.6 million people now undertake some form of shiftwork, and it is recognised that working shifts can affect a worker's health and safety, for example by affecting performance and attentiveness, which may increase the risk of accidents and injuries. In addition, shift workers may have irregular patterns of eating, sleeping, working and socialising that may also lead to health problems.

HSE has published new guidance for managers and others to understand and tackle the risks associated with shift work. Further information about the guidance is at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/shiftwork.htm>. The guidance (36 pages, £9.95) is available from HSE books: www.hsebooks.com, Tel. 01787 881165.

Ergonomics Essentials and IOSH DSE Workstation Assessors' courses – dates for 2006

The course dates for these popular public courses are:

Ergonomics Essentials (BOHS syllabus – 5 days) on **21-25th May in Birmingham; and 12-16th November in Birmingham** (£925).

The 2 day **IOSH DSE Workstation Assessors' course** is running on **14th/15th November 2006 in London** (£490). Dates for 2007 are: **27/28th Feb (London); 8/9th May (Edinburgh); 18/19th Sept (London); 20/21st Nov (London).**

For further details about these courses please contact Linda Peacock: Linda@hu-tech.co.uk or Tel: 01604 233 428.

Hu-Tech Ergonomics launch new web site

We are very please to announce the launch of new web site. It has been specifically designed for ease of navigation and offers a range of useful information regarding our services. The web site will be updated regularly with news and case studies from work we have undertaken which we hope you will find informative and interesting to read. For any issues regarding the web site please contact: arran.mitchell@hu-tech.co.uk