

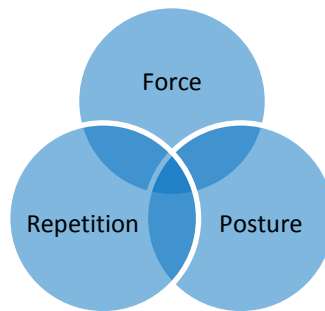
Ergonomics Impact on the Life Sciences Industry

By: Sonia Weiss

Ergonomics is “an applied science concerned with designing and arranging things so people can use them easily and safely.”¹ Why should your life sciences company be concerned about ergonomics? Because every employee of a life sciences company from manufacturing workers to lab technicians to office staff is impacted by ergonomics and the risk for repetitive motion injuries. The Bureau of Labor Statistics states that repetitive motion injuries accounted for 33 percent of all injury and illness cases in 2013 for all industries.² And for the life sciences industry, Berkley Life Sciences has seen an upward trend of claims and insured engagement concerning ergonomics which has now reached up to 25% of the claims and 50% of insured engagement for worker’s compensation policies. The tangible costs of repetitive motion injury claims can run into the tens of thousands of dollars. The intangible costs are those restricted work or lost days of the injured employee that leads to lost productivity and the decreased morale of the team.

What are your ergonomic exposures?

Ergonomic exposures will affect your operations. Identifying exposures in order to know what practices to implement will be beneficial for your long term operations. There are three main types of exposures to assess when analyzing the tasks performed at your company for the risk of ergonomic injury:



These exposures are applicable to any part of the body. When analyzing tasks, your employees should understand how much force is required for each part of the task, how many times per day the task is performed, and what posture is involved. Increased exposures to these factors can result in higher potential for repetitive motion injuries. There are many activities within a life sciences company that may seem harmless but the more these tasks are conducted, the more potential there is for a repetitive motion injury. Some examples of these activities are shown in the table below:

Task	Body Part(s) Most Affected	Potential Risk Factors
Pipetting	Hand, Wrist, Shoulder	Repetitive experiments Employee position during pipetting Force required to use pipet
Parts Assembly	Hand, Wrist, Shoulder	Repetition Employee position during assembly
Packaging of Finished goods	All body parts	Repetition Employee position during packaging Force required to move packages
Raw Material Movement	All body parts	Repetition Employee position during material movement Force required to move raw materials
Data entry/computer work	Hand, Wrist	Repetition Employee position during data entry Force required to move mouse or to type

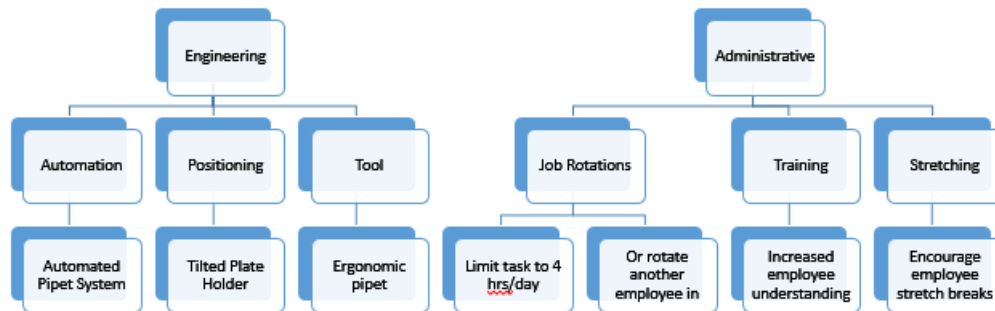
¹ = <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

² = <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/osh2.nr0.htm>

Ergonomic practices that mitigate exposures

What practices can I do at my company to help protect my employees from these identified exposures? There are two different possible approaches in order to identify what practices make sense for your operations. One approach is to engineer out any of the above noted exposures. The second approach is to implement administrative controls to minimize exposures. See charts below for examples of both approaches.

Approaches



Berkley Life Sciences resources available to you

Berkley Life Sciences is dedicated to providing resources to your company that will assist you in mitigating your exposure to repetitive motion injuries. These resources currently include conducting ergonomic assessments for complicated cases and an ergonomics train-the-trainer course to provide the knowledge onsite at your company.

Our newest resource is an online ergonomics portal training tool that will provide individual access for your employees to understand how they can best mitigate their exposure to repetitive motion injuries. This resource can be accessed through the following link on our website: Berkley Life Sciences Ergonomic Solutions at <http://www.berkleyls.com/exclusive-resources/risk-management/>. Quarterly webinars on the latest ergonomics tips and tricks will complement this online training tool. If you would like to get in touch with someone, please contact us at blsrmr@berkleyls.com.

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