Sitting time intervention reduces neck-shoulder pain among office workers

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Conclusion
Neck-shoulder pain was reduced among office workers in the Take a Stand! intervention. There were no changes for pain in back-lower back and extremities.

Why
Sitting at work has been found to increase musculoskeletal pain. The workplace intervention Take a Stand! reduced accelerometer-measured sitting time at work by 71 minutes after 1 month and 48 minutes after 3 months (Danquah et al. 2016). We therefore aimed to study the effects on musculoskeletal pain.

How
A 3 months intervention including five elements:
1. Local ambassadors and management support
2. Environmental changes
3. Lecture on sitting time and health
4. Workshop ensuring local adaptation at individual, office and workplace level
5. E-mails and text messages.

The intervention focused on four strategies to reduce sitting:
a. Using a sit-stand desk
b. Breaking up prolonged periods of sitting
c. Having standing and walking meetings
d. Setting common goals at office level.

Control participants were instructed to behave as usual.

Who
Take a Stand! was a cluster randomized controlled trial aiming to reduce sitting time among office workers. Four workplaces with a total of 317 participants from 19 offices participated in the trial. All participants had sit-stand desks.

What
After three months the OR for pain in neck-shoulders was 0.52 (95%CI 0.30:0.92, p=0.02) in the control group compared to the intervention group taking baseline values into account. No differences were found between the intervention and control group for pain in back-lower back and extremities over the three months intervention period. See figure 1.