

A multicomponent intervention to reduce daily sitting time in office workers: the SMART Work & Life three-arm cluster RCT

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Disclosure of interests of authors

Full disclosure of interests: Completed ICMJE forms for all authors, including all related interests, are available in the toolkit on the NIHR Journals Library report publication page at <https://doi.org/10.3310/DNYC2141>.

Primary conflicts of interest: The height-adjustable workstations were provided at a discount cost from Posturite Ltd (Berwick, UK) (along with a small number of workstations provided in-kind) and Sit-Stand.Com (Coalville, UK). The respective companies played no role in the study design, data collection or data analyses, or in the preparation of this report. Furthermore, Posturite Ltd and Sit-Stand.Com have no relevant interests/rights in terms of project outcomes and uses. Melanie J Davies reports grants or contracts from Novo Nordisk (Bagsværd, Denmark), Sanofi-Aventis (Paris, France), Eli Lilly and Company (Indianapolis, IN, USA), Boehringer Ingelheim (Ingelheim am Rhein, Germany) and Janssen Pharmaceuticals (Beerse, Belgium), outside the submitted work; and personal fees from Novo Nordisk, Sanofi-Aventis, Eli Lilly and Company, Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp. (Whitehouse Station, NJ, USA), Boehringer Ingelheim, AstraZeneca (Cambridge, UK), Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Servier Laboratories (Suresnes, France), Mitsubishi Tanabe Pharma (Osaka, Japan) and Takeda Pharmaceuticals International (Bannockburn, IL, USA), outside the submitted work. David W Dunstan reports grants or contracts from National Health and Medical Research Council Australia (Canberra, ACT, Australia), Diabetes Australia (Canberra, ACT, Australia) and National Heart Foundation of Australia (Sydney, NSW, Australia), outside the submitted work. Malcolm H Granat is a co-inventor of the activPAL physical activity monitor (PAL Technologies Ltd, Glasgow, UK) and a director of PAL Technologies Ltd. Genevieve N Healy reports grants or contracts from National Health and Medical Research Council Australia, outside the submitted work.

Published September 2023

DOI: 10.3310/DNYC2141

Plain language summary

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Public Health Research 2023; Vol. 11: No. 6

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NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Plain language summary

Office workers spend a large proportion of their day sitting. High levels of sitting have been linked to diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. The SMART Work & Life intervention is designed to reduce office workers' sitting time inside and outside work. The SMART Work & Life intervention involves organisational, environmental, group and individual strategies to encourage a reduction in sitting time and was designed to be delivered with and without a height-adjustable workstation (which allows the user to switch between sitting and standing while working). To test whether or not the SMART Work & Life intervention worked, we recruited 756 office workers from councils in Leicester/Leicestershire, Greater Manchester and Liverpool, UK. Participants were from 78 office groups. One-third of the participants received the intervention, one-third received the intervention with a height-adjustable workstation and one-third were a control group (and carried on as usual). Workplace champions in each office group were given training and resources to deliver the intervention.

Data were collected at the start of the study, with follow-up measurements at 3 and 12 months. We measured sitting time using a small device worn on the thigh and collected data on weight, body fat, blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels. We asked participants about their health and work and spoke to participants to find out what they thought of the intervention.

Our results showed that participants who received the intervention without workstation sat for 22 minutes less per day, and participants who received the intervention with workstation sat for 64 minutes less per day, than participants in the control group. Levels of stress, well-being, vigour (i.e. personal and emotional energy and cognitive liveliness) and pain in the lower extremity appeared to improve in the intervention groups. Participants viewed the intervention positively and reported several benefits, such as feeling more energised, alert, focused and productive; however, the extent to which participants engaged with the intervention varied across groups.

Public Health Research

ISSN 2050-4381 (Print)

ISSN 2050-439X (Online)

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the PHR programme as project number 16/41/04. The contractual start date was in March 2018. The final report began editorial review in March 2021 and was accepted for publication in June 2022. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The PHR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, the PHR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, the PHR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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