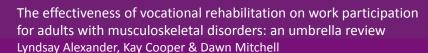


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The Scottish Centre for Evidence-based Multi-Professional Practice: A JBI Centre of Excellence, Robert Gordon University, UK School of Health Sciences, Robert Gordon University, UK

#### Background:

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) are a common problem for working adults and have a significant effect on functional ability, quality of life, medical costs and time off work.

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) has been identified as a solution to address the impact of MSD in working age adults with a significant number of systematic reviews on the topic.

**Objective:** To determine the effectiveness of VR on work participation in working age adults with MSD.

## Research questions:

- 1. Is VR effective at improving work participation, reducing sickness absence and reducing disability due to MSD in working age adults?
- 2. Which types/modes of VR are most effective for improving work participation, reducing sickness absence and reducing disability due to MSD in working age adults?
- 3 Which MSD is VR most beneficial for?

#### Results:

Two reviewers independently reviewed all evidence for inclusion in the review and extracted data. All disagreements were resolved by discussion.

- 17 systematic reviews involving over 53,000 participants were included.
- The majority of reviews concerned low back pain (11), general MSD (3), neck/arm pain (2) and inflammatory arthritis (1), and were conducted in a range of settings.
- VR is effective for improving work participation in working age adults with MSD
- VR is effective for low back pain, general MSD and inflammatory arthritis in terms of RTW
- Effective interventions included exercise-based interventions: workplace interventions; multi-disciplinary interventions and brief education across different MSD.



## Method:

This umbrella review was conducted using the Joanna Briggs Institute umbrella review methodology. Nine databases and eight websites were searched using an a-priori protocol.

Participants – This umbrella review included systematic reviews of VR involving working age adults (18 years and over) with MSD.

Intervention – Systematic reviews evaluating VR including interventions such as workplace interventions and/or interventions that assist return to work (RTW) such as physiotherapy, exercise, back schools, education and psychological/behavioural treatment.

Context - Work

Outcomes - Primary outcome was RTW, secondary outcomes were disability, pain, and quality of life.

Studies - Published and unpublished studies in English published between 2006-2016.

# Primary outcome: Return to Work Summary of Evidence

Effectiveness		General MSD	Neck/Arm	IA
GRADE	High	Moderate	Moderate	
Effectiveness				
GRADE	Moderate			
Effectiveness		_		
CDADE	Moderate			
	Moderate			
Effectiveness				
GRADE	Moderate	Moderate		
Effectiveness				
GRADE	High	High	Moderate	
Effectiveness				
GRADE	Moderate			
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GRADE	Moderate			
Effectiveness				
GRADE	Moderate			
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GRADE	Moderate			
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## Implications:

Practice – There is a need to ensure VR includes elements of exercise and workplace interventions with a multi-disciplinary focus to ensure improved work participation, reduced pain and disability for working age adults with MSD.

Research – There is a need to observe reporting guidelines for intervention studies to improve transparency of interventions, reduce heterogeneity and enable meta-analysis in systematic reviews.

