

THE TMS PROS PROGRAMME – SUPPORTING MSDS PREVENTION IN THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SECTOR

Introduction

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) account for 88% of recognised occupational diseases in France (i.e. almost 45,000). In addition, every year there are 70,000 workplace accidents (lumbago) related to manual handling of loads with at least four days off work.¹ In the health and social care (HeSCare) sector, 95% of occupational diseases are related to MSDs, and more than 2.3 million working days are lost as a result of sickness absences. More than 60% of these absences are related to back pain.²

With these figures in mind, the TMS Pros programme³ was launched in 2014 by the Health Insurance — Occupational Risks section (Assurance Maladie-Risques Professionnels)⁴ of the National Health Insurance Fund (Caisse Nationale de l'Assurance Maladie, CNAM), with the participation and support of regional offices of the pension and health at work insurance funds (Caisse Assurance Retraite et Santé au travail, CARSAT) and Caisse Régionale d'Assurance Maladie (CRAM) Ile de France.⁵ The programme is based on four online stages that address risk factors and work. It is available to any company wishing to take long-term action to prevent MSDs among its employees and also includes a support component provided by the Regional Occupational Risks branches of the French National Health Fund for companies most affected by MSDs.

In view of the public health issue that MSDs and low back pain still represent, this programme has been continued and expanded since 2014. Since 2016, the initiative has also provided financial support to SMEs to implement MSD preventive measures. The first phase of the TMS Pros programme targeted 8,000 companies, heavily impacted by MSDs, that were identified in priority sectors of activity such as HeSCare,⁶ construction, mass distribution, the food industry, the metallurgical industry, cleaning and logistics transport.

This case study focuses on the TMS Pros programme in the HeSCare sector, its specific tools and practical examples. Further general information on the programme is available on the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) website.⁷

This case study is part of a research project⁸ carried with the aim to provide an overview of research on work-related musculoskeletal (MSK) risk factors and MSK health in the HeSCare sector.

Description of the case

Aims

The aim of the TMS Pros programme in the HeSCare sector is to prevent work-related MSDs by providing support to companies to put effective preventive measures into place. It is a structured

¹ L'Assurance Maladie, Risques professionnels enrichit ses programmes de prévention pour les entreprises, 2021, available at: <https://www.assurance-maladie.ameli.fr/presse/2021-03-11-dp-risques-chimiques-pros-tms-pros>

² L'Assurance Maladie, Sanitaire et médico-social, 2025, available at: <https://www.ameli.fr/hauts-de-seine/entreprise/sante-travail/risques/troubles-musculosquelettiques-tms/tms-secteur-activite/sanitaire-et-medico-social>

³ EU-OSHA – European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, *France: The TMS Pros programme and other initiatives to tackle MSDs*, 2020. Available at: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/france-tms-pros-programme-and-other-initiatives-tackle-msds>

⁴ L'Assurance Maladie, Risques professionnels, available at: <https://www.assurance-maladie.ameli.fr/risques-professionnels>

⁵ L'Assurance Maladie, L'Assurance Maladie Risques Professionnels, 2020, available at: https://www.assurance-maladie.ameli.fr/sites/default/files/plaquette_de_presentation_assurance_maladie_risques_pros_2020.pdf

⁶ L'Assurance Maladie, Risques professionnels dans le secteur de l'aide et des soins à la personne : chiffres clés, 2025, available at: <https://www.ameli.fr/hauts-de-seine/entreprise/sante-travail/votre-secteur/aide-soins-personne/chiffres-cles>

⁷ EU-OSHA – European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, *France: The TMS Pros programme and other initiatives to tackle MSDs*, 2020. Available at: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/france-tms-pros-programme-and-other-initiatives-tackle-msds>

⁸ The full report is available at: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/musculoskeletal-health-and-risk-factors-hescare-sector-review-existing-information>

process to support establishments in their approach to MSDs prevention, a major issue in the HeSCare sector where professionals are often exposed to awkward postures, significant physical exertion and repetitive movements.

For this reason, the HeSCare sector as a whole has been targeted, with even more specific attention being paid to nursing homes (EHPADs). A total of 1,122 EHPADs were targeted and supported between 2018 and 2023 in France (14% of the 7,850 establishments were involved in the process).

What was done and how

The TMS Pros programme is designed to enable companies to structure their approach to the prevention of MSDs. It provides companies with a personalised online space to follow the progress at each stage of the process and the possibility of receiving support from the prevention department of the regional office of the Health Insurance – Occupational Risks fund.

The process is divided into four steps (presented below), and it includes the 28 questions⁹ of the TMS Pros programme. These steps guide the HeSCare establishment in the process of structuring their MSDs prevention approach and also helps it to progress effectively at its own pace throughout the implementation process. The questions are the same for all the sectors of activity, however, specific tools have been developed for the HeSCare sector and are presented below.

Step 1. How am I affected?: Assess the impact of MSDs on the organisation:

- Analyse internal data (sick leave, MSD-related accidents) with the general dashboard for monitoring MSDs.¹⁰
- The ‘special quiz for the HeSCare sector’ allows for the identification of risks.¹¹

Step 2. Where to start?: Prioritise the actions to be implemented.

- Appoint a person responsible or a team dedicated to the TMS Pro programme. The ‘Become a MSD prevention coordinator in the HeSCare sector’ training course¹² enables the internal person(s) who will facilitate and coordinate the MSD prevention approach to acquire the necessary skills to carry out this mission.
- ‘Identify the risk of MSDs in your organisation - HeSCare sector’¹³ helps to identify priority workplaces and tasks, and provides assistance with getting up, handling loads, prolonged work in a standing or bending posture, and so on.
- The ‘Action plan for HeSCare sector’¹⁴ tool provides advice on how to define an action plan involving nurses, care assistants and ergonomists.

Step 3. How to act: Implement concrete solutions to reduce risks.

- Train teams in good patient-handling practices and the use of technical aids (patient lifts, sliding sheets, adapted wheelchairs).
- Rethink the organisation of tasks to reduce repetitive physical effort (e.g. shift rotation, optimum use of tools).
- Redesign work areas to improve ergonomics (e.g. height of work surfaces, circulation areas).
- Encourage regular exchanges and discussions with the teams in order to identify and resolve persistent difficulties.

Step 4. What are the results?: Measuring the effectiveness of actions and sustaining good practice.

- Assess progress using indicators such as the reduction in sick leave and MSD-related complaints.
- Organise feedback and adjust measures as necessary.

⁹ L'Assurance Maladie, Parcours TMS Pros, available at:

https://www.cgss.re/sites/default/files/documents/parcours_tms_pros_1.pdf

¹⁰ See: <https://www.ameli.fr/content/tableau-de-bord-tms-vierge-1>

¹¹ See: <https://www.ameli.fr/loiret/content/tableau-de-bord-tms-secteur-sanitaire-et-social>

¹² L'Assurance Maladie, SMS 002 - Devenir animateur prévention dans le secteur sanitaire et médico-social (AP SMS), available at: <https://formation-prev.fr/carsat-cvl/37/Devenir-animateur-prevention-dans-un-etablissement-d-accueil-et-d-hebergement-de-personnes-agees-un-hopital-ou-une-clinique-SANITAIRE-ET-MEDICO-SOCIAL>

¹³ See: <https://www.ameli.fr/content/depistage-secteur-sanitaire-et-social>

¹⁴ See: <https://www.ameli.fr/content/plan-dactions-tms-secteur-sanitaire-et-social>

- Incorporate solutions into day-to-day practices, so that the programme becomes a lasting part of the HeSCare establishment's culture.

The actions resulting from this programme may therefore relate to:

- **Ongoing training:** Teaching teams patient-handling techniques that respect the physical capabilities of carers and patients.
- **Material investments:** Acquisition of equipment adapted to limit physical constraints, such as patient lifts and inclined surfaces.
- **Raising awareness:** Promoting the importance of ergonomics and prevention in the day-to-day work of professionals.

Financial assistance is also available to help companies get started and implement the MSD approach. Aimed at companies with fewer than 50 employees, the Assurance Maladie – Risques professionnels offered two main forms of financial assistance over the period 2018-2023, to support them in their MSDs prevention initiatives (Grants TMS Diagnosis and TMS Action). Each grant is capped at €25,000.

- **The TMS Diagnostic grant** provided 70% funding for training, assessment and the development of an action plan to prevent the risks of musculoskeletal disorders.
- **The TMS Action grant** could fund 50% of the cost of purchasing the materials and/or equipment needed to reduce physical strain, particularly when manually handling loads, making repetitive efforts or using awkward postures.

These two grants have been replaced in 2024 by a new grant called the **Ergonomic Risk Prevention Grant**, which consolidates them and broadens their scope.¹⁵ In particular, the grant can be used to fund prevention initiatives (ergonomic diagnosis, training, purchase of assistive devices), awareness-raising initiatives (print and/or web materials, events, etc.), workstation adjustments as part of job retention and so on.

The **TMS Pros** programme, implemented in the HeSCare sector, is therefore based on a collective and pragmatic approach, involving all the players in adapting working conditions to the specific characteristics of the care professions. The results expected are:

- a significant reduction in MSDs and acute MSK pain;
- improved wellbeing at work for carers;
- maintaining skills and reducing absenteeism; and
- improved quality of patient care thanks to healthier teams.

Below (see Boxes 1, 2 and 3) are concrete workplace examples of the application of the TMS Pros approach in nursing homes and also in a clinic setting.

Box 1: Setting up a structured approach to the prevention of MSDs at the Jacques-Bonvoisin nursing home

As part of the TMS Pros programme, Carsat Normandie initiated a regional action involving seven nursing homes of the Partage et Vie foundation, including **Jacques**

Bonvoisin nursing home.¹⁶ In the context of this nursing home, the collaboration between the director and the occupational therapist has been crucial in effectively implementing the TMS Pros methodology, tailoring the programme's strategies to the specific needs of the staff and residents.

Initially, it was necessary to prioritise the actions to be implemented. It was decided to focus on the work situations that caused the most risks of MSDs. In addition to linen maintenance and distribution, there were problems with residents being seated at tables — with chairs that were difficult to manoeuvre — residents' personal hygiene, bed mobility and medication distribution, which involved push-pull constraints with the trolley.

¹⁵ L'Assurance Maladie, Subvention Prévention des risques ergonomiques, 2025, available at: <https://www.ameli.fr/hauts-de-seine/entreprise/sante-travail/aides-financieres/subventions-nationales/subvention-prevention-risques-ergonomiques>

¹⁶ Travail & Sécurité, Veille, actions et améliorations pour lutter contre les TMS, available at: <https://www.travail-et-securite.fr/ts/854/EE/veille-actions-et-ameliorations-pour-lutter-contre-les-tms.html>

The key initiatives therefore included:

Renovation of the laundry area: Washing machines were elevated to prevent laundry workers from excessive bending during loading and unloading. Rolling carts at hip height and adjustable-height tables were provided to facilitate the transport and folding of laundry, thereby reducing physical strain and awkward postures.

Investment in suitable equipment: Chairs were replaced with models equipped with gliders, allowing for easier movement and reducing physical effort during repositioning. A motorised cart, equipped with an eye-level computer, was made available to nurses for medication distribution. This device facilitates movement through long corridors and improves medication traceability, thereby reducing stress associated with this task.

Manual handling aids: Equipment such as electric stand-assist devices and sliding sheets have been introduced to assist caregivers during bed repositioning or transfers to chairs, minimising harmful lifting.

Training: All staff members have undergone or will undergo a specific training that encourages residents to perform tasks they are capable of. This approach helps maintain their abilities and reduces the physical burden on caregivers.

Use of an exoskeleton: A caregiver, with a specific condition, uses an exoskeleton to relieve back strain during morning routines. This equipment is used as needed, providing additional support during physically demanding tasks.

Between 2021 and 2023, workplace accidents without leave decreased from 30 to 10, and those with leave from eight to three, indicating a notable improvement in working conditions.

The facility maintains a strategy of continuous improvement, with actions planned for 2024, such as installing ceiling-mounted rails in rooms and training staff to enhance prevention practices.

These initiatives demonstrate the commitment of the Jacques-Bonvoisin nursing home to improving working conditions for its staff and ensuring a safe and suitable environment for residents

Source: <https://www.travail-et-securite.fr/ts/854/EE/veille-actions-et-ameliorations-pour-lutter-contre-les-tms.html>

Box 2: Introducing a culture of prevention in the Bénigne Joly Clinic

The Bénigne Joly Clinic, 17 part of the VYV 3 group, consists of the clinic itself in Talant, Côte-d'Or, and the Valmy Health Centre in northern Dijon, specialising in follow-up care and rehabilitation. With over a dozen services, including surgery, outpatient care, chemotherapy, dialysis, geriatrics and nutrition, the two sites handle 13,000 hospital stays, 14,000 haemodialysis sessions and 4,000 chemotherapy treatments annually. A team of 330 full-time equivalents support patients and operations, though staff frequently express dissatisfaction with challenging working conditions due to limited resources and recruitment difficulties exacerbated by the health crisis.

In 2020, the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Carsat introduced the TMS Pros programme for MSD prevention, which initially met with resistance. The Human Resource Manager embraced the initiative as a chance to improve working conditions. The occupational therapist became the programme's reference person in late 2021, receiving training to assess risks and implement workplace improvements.

Risk assessments identified priorities, such as optimising workflows in the pre-decontamination unit. Changes included automated disinfectant distribution systems, new ergonomic carts and reorganised storage for surgical instruments. Additional measures, like adjustable monitor arms and ergonomic tools for administrative staff, addressed specific concerns, enhancing comfort and reducing strain.

¹⁷ Travail & Sécurité, Planter la première graine d'une culture de prévention, 2023, available at: <https://www.travail-et-securite.fr/ts/846/DOS/TS846P012025/planter-la-premiere-graine-d-une-culture-de-prevention.html>

These efforts, guided by staff collaboration, have fostered a culture of prevention. The clinic completed the fourth and final stage of the TMS Pros programme in July 2023, which consisted of evaluating the approach in order to continue the prevention actions.

One of the objectives was to carry out workstation studies with employees, and to respond to their requests concerning their working environment.

A method for analysing all workplace accidents has also been deployed to correct any situations that require it, again with a view to improving working conditions.

Finally, various tools have already been installed for several employees, while others will be installed in the future.

The initiative's success has inspired plans to apply these practices related to MSK risk prevention to other risks, like psychosocial risks, and integrate preventive design into future facilities scheduled for 2026.

Source : <https://www.travail-et-securite.fr/ts/846/DOS/TS846P012025/planter-la-premiere-graine-d-une-culture-de-prevention.html>

Box 3: Preventing handling risks at the EHPAD Terre Nègre

In 2017, the EHPAD Terre Nègre¹⁸ in Bordeaux initiated a comprehensive strategy to prevent MSDs among its staff, following a concerning number of work-related accidents and upon recommendation from CARSAT Aquitaine. The approach was developed step by step, involving health managers and caregivers, and included the following key actions:

Training and skill development: Two staff members were trained as 'Prevention Coordinators for the Health and Medical-Social Sector', equipping them with the ability to observe and analyse activities for health risks, assess the current situation and assist management in framing OSH prevention projects. Nursing assistants from each building received training in the Prap 2S (Prevention of risks related to physical activity in the health and social welfare sector). This training enabled them to identify and analyse hazardous work situations and propose solutions.

Work situation analysis: A detailed analysis of patient handling and transfer situations was conducted in each unit, assessing each room individually. This process involved collecting and analysing information using specific tools to propose improvements tailored to user needs. The establishment identified the need for technical aids based on residents' autonomy levels and the physical strain experienced by caregivers. They assessed whether these aids were available in the room, nearby or missing. Situations requiring complete manual lifting of residents, which pose significant risks to caregivers, were identified and mapped. The priority was to eliminate these high-risk situations by ensuring appropriate technical aids were permanently available in residents' rooms.

Action plan development: A collective reflection led to the creation of an action plan, discussed within the project's Steering Committee. The strategy prioritised the rapid deployment of small, mobile and easy-to-install technical aids to address immediate needs effectively. The establishment also initiated a programme to equip rooms with ceiling-mounted rail systems for patient lifts. Employee input was crucial in selecting this equipment, with a dedicated working group formed to choose the most suitable options, considering it a strategic long-term investment.

Occupational therapist recruitment: Recognising the need for specialised skills, the EHPAD recruited an occupational therapist. This professional assists teams in identifying the most appropriate technical aids for specific caregiver-resident situations and actively contributes to the ongoing training of caregivers.

¹⁸ Carsat Aquitaine, Prévenir les troubles musculosquelettiques en EHPAD, 2024, available at: <https://www.carsat-aquitaine.fr/home/entreprise/actualites-entreprise/toutes%20les%20actualites/prevenir-les-TMS-en-ehpad.details-actualite.html>

Training room: A dedicated training room was established, housing all technical aids available in the EHPAD. This facility serves as a resource to meet the essential training needs associated with the prevention approach.

Storage space allocation: The initial analysis highlighted the necessity for designated storage spaces to facilitate new working methods related to patient handling and transfers, ensuring that technical aids are readily accessible when needed.

Through these comprehensive measures, EHPAD Terre Nègre has developed a sustainable and exemplary approach to reducing MSK risks, enhancing both caregiver wellbeing and resident care quality.

Source: <https://www.carsat-aquitaine.fr/home/entreprise/actualites-entreprise/toutes%20les%20actualites/prevenir-les-TMS-en-ehpad.details-actualite.html>

What was achieved?

The main impact measure used to evaluate the results of the programme is the frequency index (number of MSDs declared as occupational diseases per 1,000 employees) for the companies that took part in the programme. Between 2014 and 2017, their frequency index had already fallen from 6.8 to 5.9.

For the period 2018-2022, the main ambition initially set for the end of 2022 was that 80% of the establishments supported by the programme would have implemented their action plan (stage four of the programme). The COVID-19-related health crisis of 2020-2021 had a major impact on the start-up of the TMS Pros programme. By the end of 2022, 23.3% of the establishments that were supported had implemented their action plan. By mid-2023, this figure had risen to 40.8%, demonstrating that the programme was on track despite the slowdown caused by the health crisis. Facilities in the HeSCare sector, particularly nursing homes, have followed this overall trajectory. More specifically, over the period 2014-2019:

- establishments supported since 2014, across all sectors of activity, have seen their frequency index rate fall sharply (down 16.4%) compared with the establishments that did not participate in the programme (down 4.6%).
- in nursing homes, the MSD frequency index has nevertheless increased in supported establishments that have reached stage 4 (up 7.2%), but to a much lesser extent than in non-supported establishments (up 44.5%).

Success factors and challenges

The success of this programme is due in particular to the following factors:

- offering an **online platform** (TMS Pros) and a range of **sector-specific tools** to support this platform: training, financial aid, sector-specific approaches;
- supporting each establishment **individually** through the mobilisation of the regional prevention teams; and
- relying on the **commitment of management** and the **involvement of workers**, as well as internal skills development to facilitate the implementation of actions and their long-term sustainability.¹⁹

The main challenge remains on convincing managers that it is in their own interest to improve MSD prevention in their establishments. The areas for improvement for the programme's renewal period mainly concern adapting the approach and the programme to the company's sector of activity, size and level of maturity in terms of prevention, and strengthening the tools available to the company, as well as the training and financial aid on offer.

Given the high incidence of occupational diseases (MSDs) and accidents at work (low back pain, falls) in the HeSCare sector, the Occupational Risks branch of the French National Health Fund Assurance

¹⁹ L'Assurance Maladie, La démarche de prévention des TMS - le programme TMS Pros, Fabien Fontenel, available at: <https://www.cramif.fr/la-demarche-de-prevention-des-tms-le-programme-tms-pros-fabien-fontenel>

is continuing its efforts in this sector over the period 2023-2028, by targeting and supporting a total of 2,000 HeSCare establishments (mainly EHPAD and domestic care).

Transferability to other EU Member States

The TMS Pros approach can be transferred to other countries, insofar as it is implemented by an organisation that supports establishments in the prevention of their occupational risks. Beyond the tool itself — which helps structure the MSD prevention approach and can be easily adapted into different languages — the key strength of this initiative is the personalised support offered to establishments that join the programme. A dedicated prevention organisation provides guidance and assistance in finding effective solutions.

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Authors: Christine Kieffer, Virginie Pluot, Marie-Amelie Buffet (Eurogip), Martin Clarke (Panteia)

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