

Ergomechanics – Latest News

At a congress in Amberg Germany on September 29, 2005, leading scientists will address current trends and findings in the field of spine research.

Back pain has reached epidemic proportions in the countries of the West, and the situation is continuing to worsen. This has been made vividly apparent by statistics, surveys and cost studies. Yet the causes of these ubiquitous ailments are still far from being completely illuminated. Attention still mainly focuses on curing the symptoms, and efforts to introduce proper prevention, especially at places of work, are still few and far between. Now, recent spine research findings could go a long way toward preventing back problems. These findings will be presented by the researchers themselves at a congress in September.

New Insights as the Basis for Making Practical Improvements

Because of the outstandingly positive response to the first international “Ergomechanics” congress in 2001, another will take place this year in Amberg, Germany. Its theme will be “People as Sitting Beings”. The event will focus on the stresses to which spinal disks are subjected, their degenerative processes, and the corresponding muscular processes. Specifically, it is about how sitting position affects the muscles of the back and how whole-body vibrations impact health. It will be shown that sitting comfort is neither a luxury nor merely an accidental by-product — that, in fact, it can be systematically improved by involving actual users. Company physicians, ergonomists, ergotherapists and project managers from car and commercial vehicle makers should not miss this opportunity to get up to speed by hearing these cutting-edge results straight from the horse’s mouth.

The congress will be sponsored by GRAMMER AG and Sato Office GmbH, the two companies that lead the field in terms of

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92204 Amberg (Germany)

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seat ergonomics. For many years now, GRAMMER has been conducting an intensive dialog with physicians and scientists working in the field of spine research. The latest findings are incorporated into all newly developed GRAMMER products. This second congress therefore once again aims to enable an interdisciplinary, cross-country dialog among ergomechanics and biomechanics specialists and other scientists who are studying the spine from different perspectives.

The congress, featuring top-caliber speakers, will take place on September 29, 2005 in the Amberg Congress Center (ACC). The day before, the congress participants are invited to the group headquarters of GRAMMER AG in Amberg for an entertaining evening.

Ten Speakers — Ten Different Perspectives

The most prominent speaker, Professor Alf Nachemson, will open the congress by posing the provocative question, "is back pain an overemphasized problem?" and then analyzing how physicians and policymakers are dealing with this mass phenomenon in different countries. Then the Munich-based pathologist Andreas Nerlich will consider the question as to whether spinal disk degeneration is a normal symptom of aging or a pathological alteration. The British ergonomist and biomechanics specialist Malcolm Pope will then finish up the first part of the congress by presenting new possibilities for studying spine stresses and nutrition with a vertical nuclear-spin tomograph.

Two British scientists, Michael Adams (physicist and biomechanics expert) and Patricia Dolan (biologist and muscle physiologist) will then seek to define the best sitting position for the spinal disks and the muscles of the back. The Austrian experimental physicist and biomechanics expert Christian Haid will then examine the spinal curvatures that actually occur in different sitting positions.

Ansprechpartner/Contact:
Wiebke Fröhner
Telefon: +49-9621 / 880 848
Telefax: +49-9621 / 880 838
E-Mail: wiebke.froehner@grammer.com

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The last part will be kicked off by Swedish physiologist Marianne Magnusson. She will talk about how vibrations affect the spinal structures while sitting. Peter Vink from the Netherlands will then explain why it is so important to involve actual users for defining sitting comfort at the workplace. After him, the Austrian orthopedist Hans Tilscher will look at the adverse health affects on women of working while seated, and then biologist Cornelia Neidlinger-Wilke from Ulm, Germany will reveal the initial findings of the EURODISC European research project on spinal disk degeneration.

Fascinating to the End

The panel discussion planned for the end of the day promises to be both exciting and entertaining. Professor Nachemson, biomechanics expert Hans-Joachim Wilke from Ulm, who is also chairing the congress, and others scientists will face off. Nachemson's measurements of spinal disk pressures profoundly influenced the back exercises that became popular in the 1960s and 1970s. His results were interpreted to mean that sitting is more harmful than standing. But Wilke repeated the measures several years ago and came to the conclusion that spinal disk pressures are not necessarily greater in a sitting than in a standing position — and that, in fact, they can be significantly reduced by sitting in a relaxed posture. According to Professor Wilke, some of the back exercises should therefore be reconsidered.

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Grammer AG, based on Amberg, Germany, leads the world in developing and manufacturing innovative driver and passenger seats for commercial vehicles and components and systems for passenger car and commercial vehicle interiors. Wherever people use vehicles, GRAMMER sets standards in terms of safety, comfort, and ergonomics. Its **Seating Systems** division makes offroad and truck seats, as well as seats for trains, buses and coaches. Grammer Seating Systems is a technology and market leader that supplies products for both initial installation in new vehicles and subsequent retrofitting. In the automotive segment, the company provides head restraints, armrests, center consoles, and integrated child booster seats to major car makers for use in premium models, and to suppliers to the automotive industry.

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Ansprechpartner/Contact:
Wiebke Fröhner
Telefon: +49-9621 / 880 848
Telefax: +49-9621 / 880 838
E-Mail: wiebke.froehner@grammer.com

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