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Page 2: BG hospitals are the right centres for the unexpected – Interview with Professor Axel Ekkernkamp, Medical Director of the BG Hospital Group

## Prevention in transition

The pandemic has greatly reinforced the importance of safe and healthy work and made it clear that monitoring and consultancy work in combination with effective prevention services are fundamental to keeping the economy and educational institutions open. How do we now carry on with this way of thinking beyond the crisis and establish a sustainable culture of prevention in companies and educational institutions?

Pandemics, globalisation, digitalisation and demographic change are changing the world of work and education in terms of company structures, work organisation, skills, and forms of work. At the same time, our working lives are getting longer and there is a shortage of skilled workers. This shift means that companies, institutions and social security systems are faced with the challenge of keeping people healthy and employable for longer and under changed conditions. This has an impact on the prevention work done by the German social accident insurance institutions and their legal mandate.

### Modern work needs innovative solutions

New forms of work are becoming well established. This means that new hazards have to be recognised, and practical and legal issues need to be clarified. In order for prevention to be effective regardless of location, innovative solutions are needed that utilise the potential of digitalisation and strengthen the individual safety and health competence of workers. Mobile work can and must also be designed in a healthy way. Modern prevention must also take into account issues such as mental health, work-



The transformation of the world of work is putting new hazards into focus, such as mental health and the blurring of work and private life.

life balance and workforce diversity, while also taking into consideration environmental and sustainability goals.

### Contact points and better networking

The monitoring and consulting activities of the German social accident insurance are also changing. Labour inspectors are increasingly taking on guidance roles. If a company's need for advice goes beyond the mandate of the German social accident insurance, inspectors must be able to refer them to the right cooperation partners. This requires better networking with other providers and their services.

Cooperation is extremely important for effective and sustainable prevention. In order for it to work well, there needs to be a strong level of exchange and coordinated services. The Joint German OSH Strategy and the National Prevention Strategy provide a crucial foundation for coordinated and targeted action. This must be developed more. The services provided by the German social accident insurance institutions, the other statutory insurance providers and the state OSH system complement each other to form a strong, comprehensive system.

'Effective cooperation also benefits from a solid foundation of good data. We need qualitative and quantitative key figures that adequately reflect the wide range of prevention services provided by the social accident insurance system', said Dr Stefan Hussy, Director General of the DGUV. 'A comparison with the anonymised data of other statutory insurance providers would enable us to quickly identify changes. Properly prepared data can be used by inspectors for preventive and industry-specific purposes in the important field of on-site consultation.'

A stronger level of exchange is necessary for advancement and cooperation. The A+A Congress and Trade Fair in October offers a forum for this. At the congress, policymakers and prevention experts will discuss occupational safety and health of the future. Because one thing is clear: future challenges can only be overcome by working together.

➔ [www.dguv.de](http://www.dguv.de) > Webcode p021966 (German only)

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Talking with Professor Axel Ekkernkamp, Medical Director of the BG Hospital Group

# ‘BG hospitals are the right centres for the unexpected’

Dear Reader,

Enormous challenges lie ahead for the new Federal Government. The transition to clean energy is just one of many responsibilities. Climate change has triggered an unprecedented transformation process. This affects society as well as the economy and also fundamentally changes the world of work, particularly in the energy and water sectors. Highly innovative technologies are being developed that convert electricity into storable energy sources. Working with solid, liquid and gaseous biomass, wind power, photovoltaics and electromobility present new challenges for employees. This also creates new accident and health risks, which workers must be protected against well in advance.

To ensure that work remains safe and healthy, the German social accident insurance monitors developments in the world of work. In order to identify new hazards at an early stage, we monitor changes in various sectors and evaluate them regularly. The article ‘New OSH trends’ in this month’s DGUV Kompakt describes how we monitor trends to identify developments and risks and take appropriate precautions.

The German social accident insurance institutions, in their role as partner, advise and support companies and employees proactively during transitions.

Given these new hazards, the DGUV and its institutions are developing practical guidelines for healthy and safe workplaces in the future. We are working on the challenges the new government needs to tackle in order for a successful transformation process that also takes into consideration the safety of workers.

**Dr Stefan Hussy**  
Director General  
of the DGUV

**The pandemic has put an enormous burden on the health sector. The BG hospitals and clinics have also been involved in caring for people who were or are ill with Covid-19. DGUV Kompakt spoke with Professor Axel Ekkernkamp, Medical Director of the BG Hospital Group and Medical Director and CEO of the BG Hospital Berlin, about post-Covid programmes and the opportunities that have arisen for science during the pandemic.**

**Professor Ekkernkamp, the BG Hospital Group and the German Social Accident Insurance Institution for the Health and Welfare Services (BGW) developed the Post-Covid Programme. What is it exactly?**

The Post-Covid Programme covers everything from counselling and diagnostics to inpatient rehabilitation and outpatient follow-up care and is offered in all emergency and rehabilitation clinics of the BG Hospital Group. Due to the wide-range of effects resulting from Covid-19 diseases, disciplines such as neurology, pneumology, cardiology, rehabilitation medicine and psychology work closely together. Other disciplines such as ENT or gastroenterology can also be called in at short notice.

The programme’s outpatient services include post-Covid counselling for rehabilitation managers and caseworkers from the social accident insurance institutions. Post-Covid consultation is aimed at insured persons who are referred by the accident insurance institutions for further diagnostic and therapy planning. The inpatient service includes the Post-Covid Check, a comprehensive diagnostic procedure which is the basis for creating a personalised therapy concept. And, of course, rehabilitation is included with well established procedures such as the German Social Accident Insurance Inpatient Follow-Up Treatment, comprehensive inpatient rehabilitation,

neurological rehabilitation and post-Covid rehabilitation for respiratory and cardiovascular problems.

**How much is this needed do you think?**

In the social accident insurance system alone, especially at the BGW, the German Social Accident Insurance Institution for the Administrative Sector and the German social accident insurance institutions for the public sector, more than 103,000 Covid-19 cases were officially recognised as occupational diseases from the start of the pandemic until the end of August 2021. In comparison, the total number of all confirmed occupational diseases in 2019 was only 35,000. I think this shows the dimension we are talking about. In addition, around 10,000 cases have also been recognised as occupational accidents or pupil accidents. One can only speculate about the percentage of people who are not covered by the social accident insurance system and are suffering from post-Covid syndrome. One thing is clear – only by working together with our cooperation partners and other stakeholders in the health sector can we manage this work.

**The pandemic has dominated everyday life for almost 18 months now. How well have the BG hospitals dealt with the crisis?**

The pandemic has confirmed that the BG hospitals are the right centres for ‘unexpected events’ and have played their part in ensuring that the care of Covid sufferers could be provided at a high medical level. Government directives resulting in reduced capacity, the significant cost of protective equipment, the burden on staff due to quarantine regulations and, even worse, covid illnesses, have all created major challenges. Nevertheless, we have maintained a remarkable level of performance. Financially, our hospitals and clinics also suffered. However, the solidarity shown by the government, our shareholders, the stability of the group’s structure and the willingness of the BG hospitals to help each other have been of great assistance.



Photo: ©ukb

BG hospitals and clinics specialise in the emergency treatment and rehabilitation of severely injured and occupationally ill people. Prof. Ekkernkamp is seen here talking about this with the team from the Paralympics Zeitung – a joint project of the Berliner Tagesspiegel and the DGUV.

**You wrote in a journal article, about the opportunities that have arisen for science during the pandemic. What are these?**

Global research has never proven its worth as much as it has during this time. Medical and scientific communities around the world have networked to find the best medicines for treating Covid symptoms at different stages of the disease. Today, intensive care medicine has completely different treatment options at its disposal than it did at the start of the pandemic. Experts in virology, epidemiology and infectious diseases are engaged in a scientific discourse regarding the ways in which the virus is transmitted. Probably the most important point is that the coronavirus has helped achieve a breakthrough method for sustainably improving the fight against infectious diseases – mRNA vaccines. This method also makes personalised medicine possible through the use of custom-made medicines, which is likely to significantly improve the treatment of other diseases, particularly cancer.

**Before the pandemic, there were calls for structural changes to the German hospital system. Are these still relevant after the pandemic?**

There have been two schools of thought for quite some time. One group of experts favours care close to home, the other is calling for a focus on premium hospitals in order to improve quality. Even though 80% of all coronavirus patients admitted as inpatients have been treated in basic

and standard care hospitals, I fully agree with Professor Josef Hecken, the chairman of the Federal Joint Committee, that the 1,200 hospitals in Germany are enough – more complex procedures should only be performed in specialised centres. The BG Hospital Group is well positioned as a full-service care provider; in addition

“  
Global research has never proven its worth as much as it has during this time.”

to covering our core service areas – emergency treatment and rehabilitation of seriously injured and occupationally ill people – we ensure a high level of medical care through strategic cooperation partnerships with other hospitals.

However, the German hospital system is facing some major challenges. Tackling the shortage of skilled workers and the extensive impact of digitalisation are just as much a part of this as stronger networking with other stakeholders in the healthcare system – from inpatient specialist providers to outpatient service providers. The goal must be to build a modern, patient-oriented health system. This requires cooperation between multi-professional teams from a range of health care professions.

→ [www.bg-kliniken.de/en/](http://www.bg-kliniken.de/en/)

## New OSH trends

The world of work is changing in increasingly shorter cycles. Trends such as digitalisation, demographic change and more flexible work are changing work processes, equipment and content. This creates opportunities and risks for the health of workers, children, and young people in schools and universities. The DGUV Trend Report summarises which developments are emerging and their relationship to safe and healthy work.

If developments in the world of work are identified at an early stage, OSH can take an active role in shaping technical, social and political changes. As such, the DGUV continuously identifies new trends and topics that are expected to have an impact on occupational safety and health. All trends from the year 2020 are summarised in the DGUV Trend Report and placed into a trend ranking.

The trend ranking identifies the relevance of OSH topics as well as the groups of people and sectors affected. It also shows possible effects on safe and healthy work and education. The current report identifies a total of 15 relevant developments including working from home, digital education and demographic change. It also includes topics such as 5G in industrial applications, predictive maintenance and product safety in 3D printing processes.

In addition to annual monitoring, a long-term, large-scale analysis of trends which are crucial to occupational safety and health is carried out with a focus on sector-specific developments. This is done by conducting a survey of labour inspectors and prevention experts from the German social accident insurance institutions. This makes it possible to identify prevention focal areas for the coming years at an early stage and to proactively develop services. Priorities for research projects can also be derived from these observations.

→ DGUV Trend Report 2020:  
[www.dguv.de](http://www.dguv.de) > Webcode: p021874  
(German only)

→ [www.dguv.de](http://www.dguv.de) > Webcode: e1179153

# Nominated for the German OSH Award



More information (German only) on the German OSH Award is available at: [www.deutscher-arbeitsschutzpreis.de](http://www.deutscher-arbeitsschutzpreis.de)

Good ideas for safety and health at work should be recognised. That is why the German Occupational Safety and Health Award 2021 will be presented on 26 October. The award, worth €10,000 per category, is organised by the Joint German OSH Strategy (GDA), which sees the Federal Government, the Federal States and the German social accident insurance institutions pooling their occupational safety and health activities. The award is given for outstanding creative, effective and sustainable ideas for safe and healthy work. The award covers five categories: strategic, operational,

cultural, personal and newcomer. The following 13 companies have been nominated: Bayer AG – Crop Science Division, LyondellBasell AG, Mercedes-Benz AG, Altdorf GmbH, EBZ SysTec GmbH, POLY-SEL GmbH & Co.KG, Schlosser Holzbau GmbH, Tierpark Bochum gGmbH, Harald Gerjets Raumausstatter-Meisterbetrieb, Günzburger Steigtechnik GmbH, Sonepar Deutschland Region Nord-Ost GmbH, Beck Kommunikationselektronik, WandelWerker Consulting. The awards ceremony will take place during the A+A Trade Fair in Düsseldorf and will also be streamed live.

## Campaign for vocational schools: Protect the skin you're in!

The DGUV prevention programme 'Jugend will sich-er-leben' (*Young People Living Life and Living Safely*) started its 50th year with skin protection as theme of the year. Skin diseases and skin damage are a highly relevant prevention topic in the field of occupational safety and health, because skin diseases are among the most frequently reported occupational diseases. As such, it is very beneficial for young adults and trainees to deal with this topic at an early stage. Jugend will sich-er-leben (JWSL) has

provided free teaching and training media for vocational school teachers and trainers for 50 years. The prevention programme is offered to all vocational schools in Germany via the regional associations of the German social accident insurance. The JWSL media were awarded the Comenius EduMedia Seal this year. The seal is awarded for didactic multimedia products that are outstanding in terms of pedagogy, content and design.

[www.jwsl.de](http://www.jwsl.de) (German only)

## Number of the Month

7,7 million

...volunteers were covered by the German social accident insurance system in 2020. They mainly volunteered for the Federal Government, Federal States and municipalities or worked for free in the health service, welfare work and companies that provide aid.

## Insurance protection for those who help



Persons who help others in emergency situations are covered by the social accident insurance system.

Whether it be physical injuries, damaged clothing or psychological suffering – anyone who wants to protect other people from harm in a dangerous situation and comes to harm themselves is covered by accident insurance by law. This was also the case during the recent flood disaster in Rhineland-Palatinate and North Rhine-Westphalia, where numerous people were injured and traumatised. Fast, unbureaucratic help is important in such events. To provide this, the German social accident insurance establishes a central

contact point in the affected federal state, which coordinates assistance. This ensures that support services reach those who need them promptly. These services include psychological care, medical treatment, help with occupational and social reintegration and compensation for material damage. In the case of permanent damage to health, those affected receive financial compensation.

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