

A simple human right

It should be a simple human right to be allowed to choose for ourselves what furniture we are to work at.

Many scientific experiments have concentrated on small, minor details of the problems of the sitting position. The details studied have often been difficult to evaluate, but all the same, thanks to a considerable investment of energy, resources and money, the general public have been persuaded that these results could be used to design the places where we work.

Often even the scientists who have carried out these experiments have had difficulty in understanding many of the consequences of their work, and have frequently neglected to check their results and conclusions in the work place.

This is why I think it important to show the different aspects of the problems of the sitting position: how high the furniture should be, how far away you sit from your work, the way the seat and the working surface slopes, how the hips, back and neck bend, the length of the hamstring-muscle, the moment about the pelvis, the centre of gravity of the body, the distribution of weight between the chair and the feet.

These are all simple physical factors which can be weighed and measured with simple equipment, and which for most people are far more comprehensible than 'EMG' or 'Disc pressures'.

Experts have tried far too hard to force people to use special sitting positions on standard furniture with standard heights, even though it is obvious that very few people actually use the furniture properly.

People deserve better of their experts than this! Fortunately, however, most of us show an unexpected talent for making the best of bad furniture.

There is a great deal to suggest that it is the way we are told we should sit today that is in fact responsible for the rapid increase in the numbers of people in the industrialized countries who become invalids because of back complaints. It should be a simple human right to be allowed to choose for ourselves what furniture we are to work at.

As the furniture hardly can be much worse than today, I can only encourage everyone to start experimenting.

From: A.C. Mandal, The Seated Man (p 89/90)