

Participation in everyday life

Very old persons' experiences of daily occupation, occupation of interest and use of assistive devices

Akademisk avhandling

som för avläggande av medicine doktorsexamen vid Sahlgrenska akademien vid Göteborgs universitet kommer att offentligen försvaras i hörsalen Arvid Carlsson, Academicum, torsdagen 14 juni 2007 kl. 9.00

av
Greta Hägglom Kronlöf

This thesis is based on the following papers:

- I. Hägglom Kronlöf, G. & Sonn, U. (1999). Elderly women's way of relating to assistive devices. *Technology and Disability*, 10, 161-168.
- II. Hägglom Kronlöf, G. & Sonn, U. Use of assistive devices - a reality full of contradictions in elderly person's everyday life. *Submitted for publication*
- III. Hägglom Kronlöf, G. & Sonn, U. (2005). Interests that occupy 86-old persons living at home – associations with functional ability, self-rated health and socio-demographic characteristics. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 53, 196-204.
- IV. Hägglom Kronlöf, G., Hultberg, J., Eriksson, B.G. & Sonn, U. (2007). Experiences of daily occupations at 99 years of age. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 1-9, iFirst article, DOI: 10.1080/11038120601124448

Huvudhandledare:
Docent Ulla Sonn
Göteborgs Universitet

Fakultetsopponent:
Docent Louise Nygård
Karolinska Institutet



Sahlgrenska akademien
VID GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

Abstract

The overall aim of the present thesis was to examine, extend and deepen the understanding of very old persons' experience of participation in everyday life from an occupational perspective.

The thesis consists of four empirical studies. The participants are mainly very old persons (80+) living at home and were derived from the gerontological and geriatric population studies in Göteborg (H70), Sweden. *Study I* (n=11) and *study IV* (n=10) are qualitative studies in which a phenomenographical approach was adopted. *Study II* is a cross-sectional study (n=205), and *study III* is a cross-sectional and longitudinal study (n=201), which were subjected to qualitative content- and statistical analysis.

The findings in *study I* and *II* showed that very old persons used assistive devices to a high degree, and that the use of devices increased with age. Most common were devices used in hygiene- and mobility related occupations. The experiences of being a user of assistive devices varied greatly and various contradictions were found. On the one hand, the assistive devices were seen as natural or normal for the age, the devices gave support, made the person feel safe and facilitated their daily occupation. On the other hand, the assistive devices were experienced as cumbersome, gave a feeling of incapability, were a mark of old age, and made the person concerned avoid participation in everyday life.

The findings in *III study* showed that the participants had a broad range of occupations of interest, media and individual leisure interests being the most common. Personal and environmental factors were reasons for giving up interests. Persons who regarded their health as good, or had no problems in daily activities or in mobility outdoors, had more interests than those with poor health, limited abilities in mobility and in managing daily occupations.

The findings in *study IV* showed how 99-year old persons regarded themselves as competent and proud of their ability to participate in everyday life. Many signs of involvement in daily occupations were found; how they challenged; how occupational patterns preserve occupational abilities, and how incapability and restrictions as a result of personal, environmental and social hindrances were experienced.

In conclusion these studies revealed that very old persons live a creative and varied life and appear to have a variety of management/coping ability for handling the balance between abilities, limitations and environmental demands in everyday life. Daily occupations are mainly performed with the support of assistive devices, though these may be sometimes seen in a negative light. What very old persons experience and how they experience their participation in everyday life greatly affect their self-images, and this is a challenge to everyone who works with elderly persons.

Key words: very old, participation in everyday life, daily occupation, activities of daily living, assistive devices, occupation of interest, leisure, experiences, dependence, independence, living at home, occupational therapy, qualitative research, phenomenography, qualitative content analyses, community living,