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## **Older persons' efforts at problem solving - a study of eight older home modification applicants in Sweden**

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**Introduction.** Occupational therapy practice often involved services, such as home modifications (HM), aiming to support everyday life for older persons. Occupational therapy policies and theories advocate for practices that meet the needs defined by the client. However, research on older people in the home environment and service provision to this group largely ignores the complexity of how needs are defined. Older persons do not primarily experience a need for services from the society, but rather experience problems in their everyday lives that need to be solved. Researchers have argued that in order to be efficient, services must support older persons own efforts at problem solving, but little attention has been given to older persons as agents who try to solve their experienced problems.

**Objectives.** The aim of this study was to provide knowledge about older persons' efforts at solving experienced problems related to performance of daily activities in their homes, in Sweden.

### **Methods**

8 persons aged 65 or older, who had got an application for HM services approved, were selected to achieve heterogeneity in changes in everyday life expected from a HM. Data was collected with interviews and focused observations, from before the HM was installed, until there was some stability in everyday life, related to the HM service process and activity performance. Data was analysed with a theory driven hermeneutic approach.

### **Results.**

The participants' efforts at problem solving were guided by their motivation to create situations where they could perform activities in accordance with their values and preferences. Needs for HM were found to be developed and defined through the relationships between the participants' actions and experiences, guided by their personal values as well as by actions taken by other actors involved in the service process.

### **Conclusion**

The study showed that recognising older persons' efforts at problem solving as expressions of their values and preferences is important to understand how needs are developed and defined.

### **Contribution to the practice of occupational therapy**

By providing knowledge about the complexity of development and definition of needs, this study potentially contributes to occupational therapy practices that meet needs defined by the client