

Internet-based activities for seniors - participation for health?

Ingeborg Nilsson¹, Ellinor Forsberg¹, Helena Lindgren²

¹Umeå University, Dept Community Medicine and Rehabilitation, Occupational Therapy, Umeå, Sweden, ²Umeå University, Department of Computer Sciences, Umeå, Sweden

Introduction

One characteristic for an aging population is the growing number of persons with chronic conditions. These conditions, when becoming frail, could decrease the possibilities to maintain the wanted and needed activity repertoire. Commonly older people experience less mobility, where travelling, activities and socialization outside home become more strenuous. Researchers agree that an active life in older people is a healthy lifestyle, however when becoming frail the hindrance in mobility become a problem to maintain their activity repertoire. Added to this, the digital gap where older people in much less extent than younger uses the Internet for their daily activities created the focus of this project - on the older novice Internet users.

Objectives

The aim of this study was to describe a method developed for older novice Internet users, supporting activity and participation in society through Internet.

Methods

The project was carried out as a pilot-study in a middle size city in northern Sweden where an occupational therapist in collaboration with a computer scientist discovered the older person's Internet-activity needs. Based on this knowledge, development and implementation of a webpage was created with the intention to meet each individual's need for activity and participation. The web-page had the intention to support the older persons own learning process of Internet-based activities so as basic actions gradually became more complex. To keep the older person's motivation and curiosity on the Internet-based activities, the focus of the web-page was build on each self-reported individuals profile of interests and experiences. Each individual was interviewed and observed before starting using the web-page as well as after eight sessions using the web-page. Interviews and observations covered areas of activity repertoire, participation and computer skills.

Results

At the conference results from their self-reported experiences as well as the measured outcomes will be presented and discussed.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy.

Through Internet older people can develop and maintain meaningful activities. The development and use of Internet as medium is therefore of importance in future Occupational therapy and more research is needed.