

Evaluating the cognitively impaired elderly at home: A new assessment tool.

Jacqueline Rousseau^{1,2}, Alain St-Arnaud³, Nathalie Farley⁴

¹Université de Montréal, Montréal, Québec, Canada, ²Research centre Institut universitaire de gériatrie de Montréal, Montréal, Québec, Canada, ³CSSS Lucille-Teasdale, Montréal, Québec, Canada, ⁴Private practice, Montréal, Québec, Canada

Introduction: The aging population is significantly increasing worldwide. Considering that the elderly desires to live at home and that ageing often brings about cognitive problems, occupational therapists are frequently called to intervene in this area. Understanding the cognitively impaired elderly interacting with the human and nonhuman environments at home thus becomes paramount. A new assessment tool was developed, based on a Person-environment model of practice. **Objectives:** To present this tool, its development and its content validity. **Methods:** A triangulation of methods, including literature review and qualitative research designs, was conducted: an experts consultation (occupational therapists, neuropsychologists) using the focus group technique (Krueger, 1994) and a single case study design (observation of the elderly at home) (Yin, 1994) were carried out. Based on these methodological steps, a first version of the assessment tool was developed. Using a multiple case study design (Yin, 1994), the tool was submitted to a pretest (6 home-dwelling participants (elderly) and their caregivers were evaluated). Qualitative data analyses were executed (content analysis). **Results:** Experts consultation reveals that interventions focus on compensation through the human environment. The potential of the person or the nonhuman environment are rarely explored. The single case study offered a way to understand the person-nonhuman environment interaction and the person-human environment interaction by activity and role analyses. The first version of the tool was submitted to a pretest and then modified. The modified version reflects its appropriateness, usefulness and representativeness for: items, scores, evaluation modes, and interpretation. Evidence demonstrates that this assessment tool offers occupational therapists an innovative way to understand the person interacting in the environment, opening new perspectives for interventions. **Conclusion:** The content validity of this new tool is demonstrated. Strengths of this study are the scientific rigorousness of the development of the tool, its originality and its theoretical background; consequently, occupational therapists can use this tool with confidence. **Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy:** This new perspective to understand the elderly interacting with the human and the nonhuman environment in the home setting will improve interventions, quality of life and social participation. Other psychometrics studies are planned.