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## Old People at Work - A Proposal for a Systematic Review of Knowledge for Further Research

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## 96) Old People at Work – A proposal for a systematic review of knowledge for further research.

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**Introduction:** There is a lack of knowledge about how the workplace should be designed to suit both younger and older and if developments require special measures when it comes to safety. The project will be conducted in the context of the research at EAT, METALUND (Centre for Medicine and Technology for Working Life and Society) and the Ageing and Design Research and Development Program. This program is institution-wide and the aim is to take advantage of the broad expertise that exists in technology and design to contribute to Sweden being a country where people can age with confidence and where their experiences are utilized.

The definition of old people should be counted in proportion to the increased life expectancy, but we decided to start at the age of 50 to be able to compare with previous studies. We set no upper age limit.

### **Main research questions:**

1. To what extent are older people represented in the labor market and what are the conditions like, looking at various branches? Reports state that the number who continue to work, paid or unpaid, outside AKU:s surveys, is about 600 000 people or 40 % of the age group 65 and older. Currently 70 % in the age group 55-64 in Sweden works which is significantly higher than the EU average. Probably there are differences between highly educated or skilled workers and those less skilled. This knowledge survey will follow the classifications of the Swedish Work Environment Authority but there are reasons to identify any reports on the development of employment services. One of them is the growing market of employment services and recruitment of seniors and the tasks they convey, for example "*Hyr en pensioner*" (rent a retired person) and "*Go Veteran*".

2. Are there special considerations to be taken regarding the physical environment? How should the workplace be designed and work organized to meet the needs of older people?

What examples are there for alignment of the physical design, organization and content of work for older employees? Technological change is another variable which contributes to changing conditions for all but perhaps particularly for old people. Previous publications point out that those workers who are approaching retirement will obviously not become involved in technology development projects. Recent studies of older IT-users revealed that the debate is often characterized by outdated notions of their ability and willingness to change.

3. How does their continued presence in the workplace affect safety in different branches? Here, a number of aspects need to be included. Knowledge of how physical capacity is affected by age are mapped out, such as muscular strength, vision, hearing, body temperature and coordination skills and balance. Psychological factors are identified in terms of ability to process and coordinate information relative to short-term memory and different kind of computers. This includes issues of mobile computing application of all kinds, as well as learning skills, attitudes toward organizational change, motivation and expectations.

**Research design:** This knowledge survey encompasses publications in scientific data basis such as Science Direct and Medline, publications from Swedish Work Environment Authority and Swedish Statistics. Besides publications from work life research the survey will include some publications from the gerontology field. The analysis and conclusions will be discussed in a reference group associated with METALUND and EAT.

### **Some questions for discussions at the NAM Conference 2012:**

- Is this relevant knowledge considering demographic and societal development?
- What variable or questions are missing in our survey?
- Should this development, with an increase of old people at work, even be encouraged?

NR 2011;45(5)

55th Nordic Work Environment Meeting  
(Nordiska Arbetsmiljömötet)

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