OLDER PEOPLE AS VOLUNTEERS

Kjersti Jørgensen, Kristin Jess-Bakken, Beret Hoddevik and Anette Lund.

Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences.
Aging population and future client group.

The importance of roles and role-losses in old age (Mountain, Kielhofner).

Knowledge of lifestyle, roles, role changes and participation can be used in goal-setting.

What motivates older people to contribute in voluntary work.
LITERATURE REVIEW

- We searched in the electronic databases Medline, SweMed & Academic Search Premiere
- Articles contained issues like, grand parenting, health, role-loss, participation and studies.
- Literature review was based on roles and role-losses in older people.
FINDINGS IN LITERATURE

- Roles are a person’s identity (Kielhofner, 2008).
- It is possible that participation in multiple roles may act as a resource but also as a stressor. (Baker & Silverstein. 2008)
- Satisfying performance in required and desired roles, promote good health and wellbeing.
- Older age is often viewed as a period of losses because of physical, sensory, cognitive and social changes.
- This may result in roll loss, which in term could lead to social disengagement and reduced life satisfaction.
- If older people are able to preserve their roles, life satisfaction may be maintained (McKenna, Broome & Liddle, 2007).
AIM

- Does volunteering ease the transition from employment to retirement?
- Can volunteering contribute to successful ageing?
- Can past participation in roles and life satisfaction be compared to present participation in roles and life satisfaction?
### Research Questions

**What did you do before you retired?**
- Social life: family, friends,
- Work:
- Leisure:
- Diseases:
- Satisfaction:

**Can you please describe a regular day or week for you?**
- Activities
- Roles
- Leisure
- Participation
- Satisfaction
- Responsibility

**Considering what you told me have something changed after retirement?**
- Family; Spouse, children, grandchildren
- Leisure; inner motivation
- Losing the role as an employed worker. Role losses.

**Why did you start as a volunteer worker?**
- When?
- What motivates you?
- What kind of work do you do?
- What do you get in return?
- Do you believe the role as a volunteer replaces the role you once had as an employee?
- Do you think the users appreciate the work you do?
- How does the response affect you as a person?
PARTICIPANTS

- Participants: 4 older volunteer workers at Sagene Volunteer Centre aged 65 and older.
- Interviewers: Students at the Occupational Therapy Faculty in Oslo University College
Small qualitative study.

Used focus group as mean to collect the majority of the data.

This group allow exploration of a specific set of issues and shared experiences, and they provide time for thought and discussion.

Two were interviewed together and two were interviewed separately.

They were informed about confidentiality and anonymity.
What did you do before you retired?

- Work: Nurse, warehouse manager, lecturer and teacher
- Family: Two were married with no children & two were married with two children and two grandchildren.
- Leisure: Handcrafts, but not much time for leisure.
- All participants were active members of Misjonssalen, religious community based in Oslo.
- All wanted to contribute after retirement. Some even worked part time, voluntarily, or asked if they could keep on working.
- All participants had active spouses with the same activity level as themselves.
- All seemed to be satisfied.
- 3 of 4 worked closely with people. All participants were actively engaged in their work, some even worked in their spare time.
- Children and family do not give a clear indication in level of activity in our participants everyday life.
- An active spouse can be an important factor for an active lifestyle that continues during retirement.
Can you please describe a regular day or week for you?

- Volunteering at least once a week at the Volunteer Centre
- Members of Misjonssalen
- Leisure: Hiking, handcraft, theatre, sudoku, exercising, crossword, cooking, visiting friends/users and family.
- All told that they were very satisfied with their life and glad to be a part of the Volunteer Centre.
- During the work as an volunteer some used the knowledge and experience from their former work-field.
- Activities and participation were highly valued and inner motivated.

- Lots of activity and participation in different roles.
- Most frequent leisure was hiking and handcraft.
- All participants highly appreciated working as an volunteer and felt inner motivation.
### FINDINGS THIRD QUESTION

**Considering what you told me, has something changed after retirement?**

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<tr>
<td><strong>•</strong></td>
<td>Do whatever he/she want to.</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong></td>
<td>Still very engaged in society.</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong></td>
<td>One missed his former workplace because of his colleagues. Retired because of sickness.</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong></td>
<td>One used the word “major upheaval” without expressing it any further</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong></td>
<td>Volunteer work a way of dealing with losses (function and work) after retirement.</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong></td>
<td>Less to do, but they can do whatever they want to.</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong></td>
<td>All participants were strongly engaged in society.</td>
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<td><strong>•</strong></td>
<td>Felt volunteer work was a way of dealing with losses.</td>
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Why did you start as a volunteer worker?

- All wanted something meaningful to do.
- Two felt useless because of illness.
- One wanted to have something to do, and wanted new impulses by being a volunteer.
- One mentioned external structure.
- Motivated because they see how much their contribution means to the users.
- One adopted a family: child and grandchild through the Volunteer Centre.
- Some expressed environmental boundaries during wintertime also for other volunteers they know.
- Many were engaged by others to the volunteer centre, often their spouse.

- Every participant wanted to do something meaningful, getting new impulses and feeling appreciated.
- All participants valued social skills, through their volunteer centre they have a social belonging, friends and even “family”.
- Environmental boundaries during wintertime.
- Engaged by others.
- External structure.
Our study underpins the results from McKenna Broome & Liddle, (2007)

Loosing the role as an employed worker gives loss of different work aspects. In our findings we may say that the role as a volunteer worker has taken over the role as an employee.

In our fieldwork the person with stroke contributed to the Volunteer Centre at the same level as those without stroke.

Environmental barriers.

In our fieldwork illness was a reason to do volunteering because they could participate at their own level and feel needed and appreciated.

Enabling volunteer work for older people may be a good intervention.
Ageing is not necessarily a boundary in relation to level of activity.

We must consider the lack of experience in the interviewers, and also that the participants were interviewed where others could listen to the conversation.

The interviewees were volunteer workers and naturally engaged, and social individuals. The answers were therefore more positive related.

All participants were chosen by the leader of the Volunteer Centre. The participants are therefore chosen after who the leader thought would be the most interesting to interview.
THANKS TO!

- Anne Linga and Axel Alessandri for carrying out interviews with us.
- Brian Ellingham for guidance and mentoring.
- Anette Lund for filling out the abstract.

http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/aging/roles.html
20.01.2011, 09.36 a.m.


McKenna, K., Broome, K., & Liddle, J. (2007). *What older people do: Time use and exploring the link between role participation and life satisfaction in people aged 65 years and over.* Australian Occupational Therapy Journal 54, 273–284


