The Challenges of Interviewing Older People in Their Own Homes: Reflections and Suggestions from the Field

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Agenda

- Aim and Scope
- Recruitment
- Safety
- Interviewing
- Home environment
- Emotional Challenges
- Conclusion
Aim and scope

- **Aim**: Integration of medical devices in the lives of older people
  - Psychological and social impact
  - Qualitative data
- **Method**: Analyse qualitative data gathered in semi-structured interviews
  - Discover patterns in data
- **Plan**: Conduct and record interviews with older people (65 yrs plus)
  - In a place convenient to the subject
  - Often their home.
Recruitment

- Consideration
  - Vulnerable group
- Initial advertisement
  - Local university
  - Shops
  - Post offices
  - Churches
  - Local press
- Disappointingly low “yield”

- Gatekeepers
  - Surprisingly difficult to convince
- Most successful method
  - “Snowball effect”
  - Get participants to spread the words to others
- Lessons learned
  - CRB clearance
  - Perseverance, negotiate with gatekeepers and vary recruitment tactics
Participant and Interviewer Safety

- Safety of the interviewee
  - Inviting someone home may cause anxiety
    - Offer the possibility of a chaperone
  - Most interviews conducted with a partner or spouse present

- Safety of the interviewer
  - Especially important when visiting someone’s home
    - Plan ahead
    - Hide valuables
  - This research conducted alone
    - Designated person who knew where the researcher was
    - Phone contact after interview

[HCI4H] - Henrik Moerk
Interviewing in a healthcare setting

• **Standard technique**
  ○ The research interview
  ○ Defined as a “professional conversation”
  ○ May disempower interviewee.

• **The case study’s approach**
  ○ Interview based on dialogue
  ○ Importance of smalltalk

• **Challenges**
  ○ Impression that older people are reluctant to criticising devices
  ○ Gratitude bias
  ○ *Subjects participated out of a sense of “gratitude”*
The home environment

- Interviews in participants homes
  - Represents unique challenges
  - Relinquish control to interviewee

- Communication
  - Easier to engage in more meaningful conversation
  - Interviewees demonstrated their equipment
    - Where
    - How
    - When

- Interviewee spouse/partner
  - Represents another unique challenge
  - Cannot ask to exclude someone from their own room/house
  - Conversely, a new source of information
  - Consent from spouse
  - Less frank conversation
Emotional challenges

● Interviewee
  ○ Healthcare can be an emotional topic
  ○ Can affect the interview
  ○ May adjust phrasing and order of questions
  ○ May be appropriate to offer details of support organisations

● Interviewer
  ○ Challenges have to be handled
  ○ Preparation
  ○ Adjustment
  ○ Debrief
  ○ Reflect
Conclusion

● Recruitment
  ○ Test different strategies
  ○ Perseverance

● Different from lab-studies
  ○ A lot more control for the participant
  ○ Gain access to participants’ homes

● Flexibility
  ○ Planning is key, but
  ○ Handle challenges as they arise

● Vulnerable population
  ○ Care must be taken
Questions?