

Methods to assess older persons needs of welfare technology. A survey among welfare technology providers

V. Zander

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Purpose The aim of this study is to highlight methods and instruments used for needs assessment and evaluation of welfare technology to older persons in municipalities, county councils and regions in Sweden. As the population ages, innovations are required to meet the healthcare needs of older persons. Assistive technology might help to meet these needs and contribute to the quality of life of older persons. Welfare technology is technology used to improve care and services for older people (Cozza et al., 2018). It includes technology such as robots, sensors, GPS alarms, digital monitoring and digital reminders. It is perceived as a way of dealing with the issues of increasing resources for eldercare and is framed as fulfilling the needs and wishes of older individuals to be independent, active and social engaged (Hadnagy, 2017). Assistive technology should be integrated based on individual needs, assessed using relevant methods (Khosravi & Ghapanchi, 2016). Research confirm the importance of an appropriate early assessment of consumer needs for assistive technology (Scherer et al., 2005). **Method** A self-administered online questionnaire distributed to each Swedish municipality, region and county council. **Results and discussion** Results suggest that professionals involved are mainly care managers and occupational therapists. Both professions use guidelines by the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare. Although, methods for needs assessment are not included in those guidelines. The instruments used during needs assessments and evaluations are administered mainly by occupational therapists, and deal with cognitive abilities or the ability to perform activities of daily living. There is a risk that prescribed assistive technology devices remain unused (SOU 2017:43). One crucial reason may be whether the device has been able to meet the person's needs. This might be prevented by a structured needs assessment. According to the results from this study, it is suggested that there is a lack of structure regarding methods to assess needs and evaluation related to welfare technology for older persons. Some of the responding counties in the study have developed their own guidelines, but usually the provider is left to decide.

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Address: Mälardalen University, School of Health, Care, and Social Welfare, Eskilstuna, Sweden.

Email: viktoria.zander@mdh.se