

M.M. Sinoo, H.S.M. Kort, L. Altena, N. van den Berg, C. van Schie, J. van de Werken. *The living environment in the nursing home for older adults with low vision: development of an environmental observation scale*. *Gerontechnology* 2008; 7(2):209. Low vision is very common among older adults. Visual impairments can be a result of the normal ageing process or diseases, such as diabetes. In the USA and the Netherlands, respectively 26 and 36% of the nursing home residents are estimated to have visual impairments<sup>1,2</sup>. Vision impairment can result in the loss of basic visual abilities: acuity, contrast sensitivity and visual field. Changes in visual function must be taken into account when considering activities of daily living, quality of care and the environmental design of the nursing home. Creating a healthy environment for older persons with low vision includes improvement of the living environment; controlling lighting and brightness, the use of clear colours and contrasts, the arrangement of spaces and clear acoustics. Improvement of care includes the use of contrast and lighting in daily care procedures. An observation scale was developed to measure the environment of the visually impaired nursing home resident. In the first phase of the study a literature review (Medline) was conducted to define aspects of the environment relevant to older adults with low vision. These aspects were listed for a building project of a mock-up dwelling for older adults with low vision. In a second phase the list was modified into an environmental observation scale and adjusted by real observations in practice. In a feasibility study the scale was tested in two nursing homes and a specially designed environment for the visually impaired. **Results and discussion** The environmental observation scale consists of several subscales: general living environment, private environment, daily activities and implementation of aids by caretakers. For each nursing home scores were collected per heading. These scores were compared with those for the professionally-designed environment. In the future, the environmental observation scale will be tested in more departments of several nursing homes to gain information about the usefulness for professional caregivers as well as the applicability of the observation scale in the home situation. Attention should be given to the awareness among professional carers of the use of lighting and contrasts in daily care situations.

## References

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**Address:** Hogeschool Utrecht, the Netherlands; E: marianne.sinoo@hu.nl