

H-W. Wahl, A. Fänge, F. Oswald, L. Gitlin, S. Iwarsson. *The home environment and disability-related outcomes in aging individuals: What is the empirical evidence? Gerontechnology 2008; 7(2):236.* Building on the disablement process model (DPM), this review paper addresses two critical questions on home environments and disability-related outcomes in later life: (i) What is the recent evidence regarding the relationship between home environments and disability-related outcomes? This question addresses the risk factors component of the DPM. (ii) What is the recent evidence regarding the relationship between home modifications and change in disability-related outcomes? This question addresses the extra-individual factors component of the DPM and whether environmental-based interventions make a difference in the disablement process. **Design and method** Based on computerized and manual search, we traced related peer reviewed original publications and review papers between January 1, 1997 and August 31, 2006. 25 original investigations and no review papers for research question 1 and 29 original investigations and 10 review papers for research question 2 were identified (*Figure 1*)¹. **Results** For research question (i), substantial evidence for a meaningful relationship between home environments and disability-related outcomes exists but is limited by cross-sectional and poor research quality. For question (ii), substantial high quality evidence exists that improving home environments reduces disability-related outcomes, but mostly in one functional domain (self-care). **Implications** Substantial evidence exists supporting the role of home environments in the disablement process. However, more longitudinal and RCT-based research is warranted, and that which is focusing on the psychometric optimization of measurement devices targeting the home environment, considering person-environment fit dynamics, and attending to the interrelationships of the objective and perceived environment.

References

1. Wahl H-W, Iwarsson S. In: Geropsychology. European perspectives for an ageing world. Göttingen: Hogrefe ; 2007; pp 49-66

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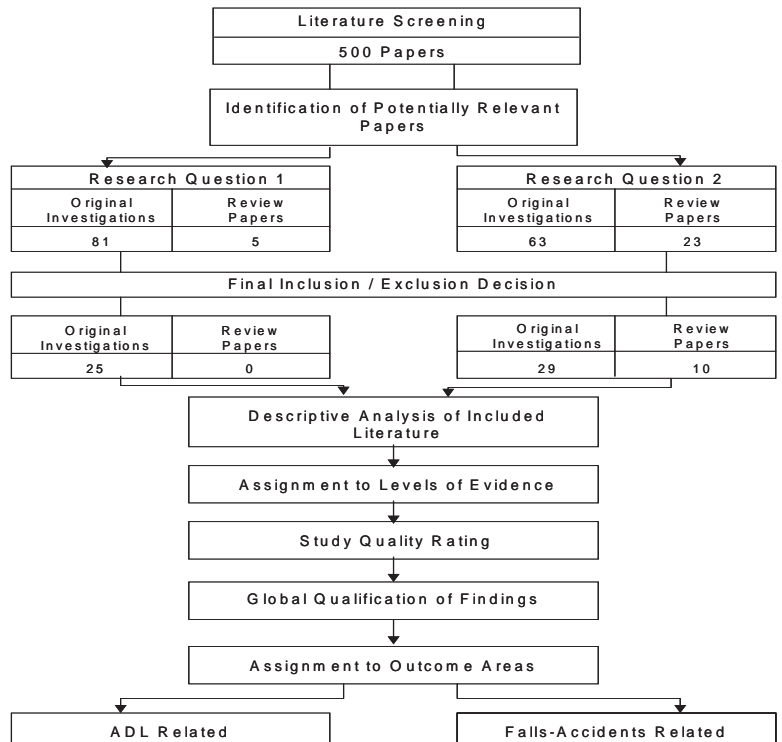


Figure 1 Preparation of data body for the review