

A. AKERBERG, M. FOLKE, T. JAGESTIG BJURQUIST, M. LINDÉN, C. GUSTAFSSON. **A method to create interdisciplinary health and welfare technology research projects: Collaboration between academia and care providers.** *Gerontechnology* 2016;15(suppl):29s; doi:10.4017/gt.2016.15.s.997.00

Purpose We are facing an aging population¹ and the need for health and welfare technology to meet users' needs is a fact. To meet this challenge, the Arena for Health and Welfare Technology (the Arena) was initiated at Mälardalen University in 2014, as a multi-professional and interdisciplinary research initiative². The aim of the Arena is to increase the collaboration of the researchers from the University and the external actors to create benefit and value for the future health and welfare. The Arena organizes events promoting interaction and interdisciplinary research projects. At a thematic day in May 2016, a working process to effectively initiate interdisciplinary research based on the users' needs, was introduced.

Method To increase the participation for the thematic day and for future research projects within health and welfare technology, a call offering a grant from the Arena fund was created for participants who attended the thematic day. This call aimed at stimulating the creation of interdisciplinary research projects within health and welfare technology, with the purpose to write proposals for external research funding. Speakers from the region were invited, representing health and social care, companies within the health and welfare technology field and regional R&D units. The speakers were presenting real needs based from the view of the clients, patients, relatives, staffs and organizations, which possibly could be solved by using health and welfare technology. After the user need presentations, a working process was followed, led by the company Konkret Utveckling AB. The goal of the working process was to identify prioritized needs for the day, and in the continuation create project groups to be the basis for future interdisciplinary research projects. After identifying the prioritized user needs, project groups started work to specify the framework for the planned research project, and then make a short oral presentation to share and discuss their research ideas. **Results & Discussion** The theme day attracted more than 50 interested participants (*Figure 1*). At the end of the thematic day, four interdisciplinary groups, including new constellations of researchers existed. The aims of the four groups were based on prioritized user needs, presented by regional health and welfare representatives. Involved group participants, researchers and company representatives, represented different disciplines, for example engineering, sensor technology, robotics, pedagogics, physiotherapy, nursing, social work and economy. The working method used during the thematic day was successful, and can be used in developing initiatives for interdisciplinary health and welfare technology research projects based on the needs of the end users.

References

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Figure 1. The auditorium and Marie Liljeberg, Västmanland county council (Photographer Anna Akerberg)