Interviewing older people

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Who is old?

What is the interview context?

Older people differ from each other more than younger people
“Well, the situation of older people. According what I have heard, I can’t say any example on my own behalf. But what I have heard, it’s not a long ago, when there was a programme on elderly care in tv...”

Man, 90 yrs
Who is interviewing?

How to recruit?
Special issues when interviewing older people

• Differences in age and experience
  • Different meanings
  • Pchyco-physiological slowdown
• Physical limitations
  • Hearing, vision, speech
• Cognitive limitations
  • Memory disorders
• A third wheel and gatekeepers
Prepare yourself

• To drink coffee
• An interviewee asks you personal questions and opinions
• An interviewee tells ”unrelevant” stories
• The most interesting thing is told after you have shut down a recorder

• Reciprocity
• Flexibility during an interview
Who benefits from an interview?

• An interviewer
  • Gets data

• An interviewee
  • Their voice is heard
  • Their story and opinions are valued
  • Empowering experience
Remember!

- An old person is not just old
- Older people are a heterogenius group
- Be prepared to poor hearing or vision, but don’t overdo
- It is possible to interview people with memory disorders
- Don’t limit your topics because of your prejudice


• Pleschberger, Sabine, Seymour, Jane E, Payne, Sheila, Deschepper, Reginald, Onwuteaka-Philipsen, Bregje D, et al. (2011). Interviews on End-of-Life Care With Older People: Reflections on Six European Studies. Qualitative Health Research 1588-1600