**Perceived life situation and identity among older home-living people**

Bjørg Dale, Ulrika Söderhamn & Olle Söderhamn  
Centre for Caring Research - Southern Norway, Faculty of Health and Sport Sciences, University of Agder

Contact: bjorg.dale@ui.a.no

**Background:** The public policy in Norway is that older people should live a good life in their own homes as long as possible. This is also supposed to be in line with older persons’ own preferences.

**Study aim:** To explore the meaning of self-care and health for perception of life situation and identity among single-living older individuals in rural areas in southern Norway.

**Method:** A sample of eleven single persons between 69 and 85 years of age, who in a previous study perceived themselves to be in good health, were interviewed about experiences related to own self-care and health. A phenomenological-hermeneutic method was used in the text analyses.

**Findings: structural analysis**

**Being able to do**
- Performing goal-directed self-care actions
- Finding a balance between activity and rest
- Finding a balance between social interactions and solitude

**Being able to be**
- Being conscious about maintaining own health
- Experiencing independence and freedom
- Being attached to the home and surroundings
- Having and using internal resources

**Findings: interpreted whole:** The life situation of the interviewees was interpreted as inevitable, appropriate and meaningful. Their identity was constituted by their freedom and self-chosen actions in their personal context.

**Conclusion:** The overall impression was that independence and the ability to control and govern own life in accordance with preferences were ultimate goals for the informants.