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Ergonomic issues related to clothing and body changes of the new elderly women

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Abstract

This article presents the changes that occur with the body of the new elderly women and their relationship with clothing. It aims to investigate if these women can find on the market the right clothes for their needs and if ergonomic issues such as comfort, usability, safety and welfare are being considered. This study investigated women between 61-68 years of age through focus groups in order to obtain their impressions of the new elderly women through images of various models presented, encouraging discussions about the clothes, whether they were or not appropriate for the age of the users, what were their thoughts about the clothes and if they would use them. The results showed that the models found in the market are not meeting their changing needs, some clothes do not favor the current conformation of their body, such as sleeveless blouses, too tight or too short dresses, pants with very low waist, excessive fabric near the abdomen, shapes that generate discomfort, or fabrics and prints said "unfit" for their age.

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1. Introduction

The world's population has been progressively aging, not only in developed countries but also in developing countries. The advent of new technologies and research and the discovery of new drugs coming on the market, add up to a gradual and significant decrease of birth rates in the world.

The elderly in society are seen, in general, as a group who is not part of any social, economic or affective processes. However, despite the inherent age changes related to the body, cognition and sociability, the elderly today want to improve their quality of life, both physically, through exercises, as well as cognitively, by attending schools, courses and universities.

In Brazil, the growth of the senior population is also significant. Currently, there are about 19 million seniors, representing at least 10% of the population. [1] With this increase of the elderly population, it is important to note the emergence of a new elderly woman. More women are active with increased participation in the social and professional functions.

Socially and professionally active, the new elderly woman is located in the age range of sixty to seventy-five years old. Women, who despite the changes that the body presents, such as loss of height, reduction of certain body dimensions, weight gain, among others, lead us to think that we cannot use the same measurement standards for the adult population to manufacture their clothing.

“These ‘beautiful seniors’ invented a special place in the world and constantly reinvent themselves. They continue singing, dancing, creating, loving, playing, working, transgressing taboos, etc. They do not retire, but refuse the rules that would oblige them to behave like old people. They do not become invisible, deleted, unhappy, sick, depressed. They [...] are rejecting stereotypes and creating new possibilities for aging.”[2].

As for the changes in the body of the senior woman, we can emphasize, according to Dreyfuss[3] an average loss of 6% of the height, decreased muscle mass, which leads to other changes, such as decreased bone density and increased fat, which could increase the weight up to two pounds every ten years. Changes of the abdomen, sagging and localized fat are other inevitable changes.

Iida [4], however, reminds us that not all symptoms of senility apply to all elderly. Individuals aged 60 years or more, often have as much strength and disposition as 20-30 year olds. Steady activities preserve the physical, motor and mental capacities of people. Despite the losses, the elderly are not unable to work and live well, especially those who have prepared themselves throughout their lives, exercising physically and / or intellectually.

The objective of this paper is to present the changes that occur with the body of elderly women and the difficulties of the new elderly in relation to clothing.

2. Body Transformations of the Elderly Woman

Aging is a natural process that reflects a phase of human life when physical, cognitive and social changes begin. The elderly realize that despite many gains accumulated in life, the losses begin to emerge, especially in relation to health. To Iida [4] the aging process causes an erosion of cardiovascular functions, muscle strength, joint flexibility, the sensory and brain functions. It starts around 30 to 40 years of age and accelerates after the 50's. According to Santos and Sala[5] this process also begins at age 30, when the skeleton is fully formed; from there it begins to lose bone and muscle mass; it also suffers decreased metabolism, losing 10% of physical capacity for each year of life.

Postural changes start about 40 years of age according to Silveira et.al. [6] and are characterized by increased curvature of the back (kyphosis) and reducing lumbar lordosis. The height of the individual begins to decrease, and difficulties of reach and flexibility, especially of the arms, are noticed. Authors believe that changes in posture are not always due to a defect or anomaly, they can also be offsetting changes that result from other neuromusculoskeletal mutations in the spine. Many changes are the result of natural wear or poor postural habits. Silveira et.al.[6] points out that the loss of muscle mass leads to muscle weakness and is the main cause for the deterioration of the functional capabilities in the aging process, which leads to mobility loss.

Also at the age of 40 memory decreases, vision problems tend to arise between 40 and 50 years, such as presbyopia. At 60 years of age, the brain of the elderly no longer have the same speed. Hearing, touch, smell and taste will also suffer losses. The woman's body is constantly changing, from childhood to adolescence, adolescence to adulthood and finally old age, where we find the new senior women, around 60-75 years of age. All body

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