

Environmental Factors Affecting Elderly Physical Activity Level

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Introduction

Physical activity is recognised as an effective strategy for preventing increases in chronic diseases in the elderly and reducing associated healthcare expenditure; in addition it improves the social interactions of the elderly and promotes psychological well-being. However, a prevalence of inactivity among the elderly has been observed and elderly people are at particular risk of adopting a sedentary lifestyle. To surmount sedentary behaviour in the elderly it is valuable to understand the factors affecting their physical activity.



Aims

Some types of physical activities, such as cycling and walking, take place in the urban environment. These types of activities may be the most sensitive to changes in urban design and planning. Existing research on improving the physical activity levels of the elderly has been conducted from the perspective of health and medicine disciplines, in a disjointed fashion. This review aims to provide a holistic view of factors affecting the physical activity of the elderly from an urban planning perspective.

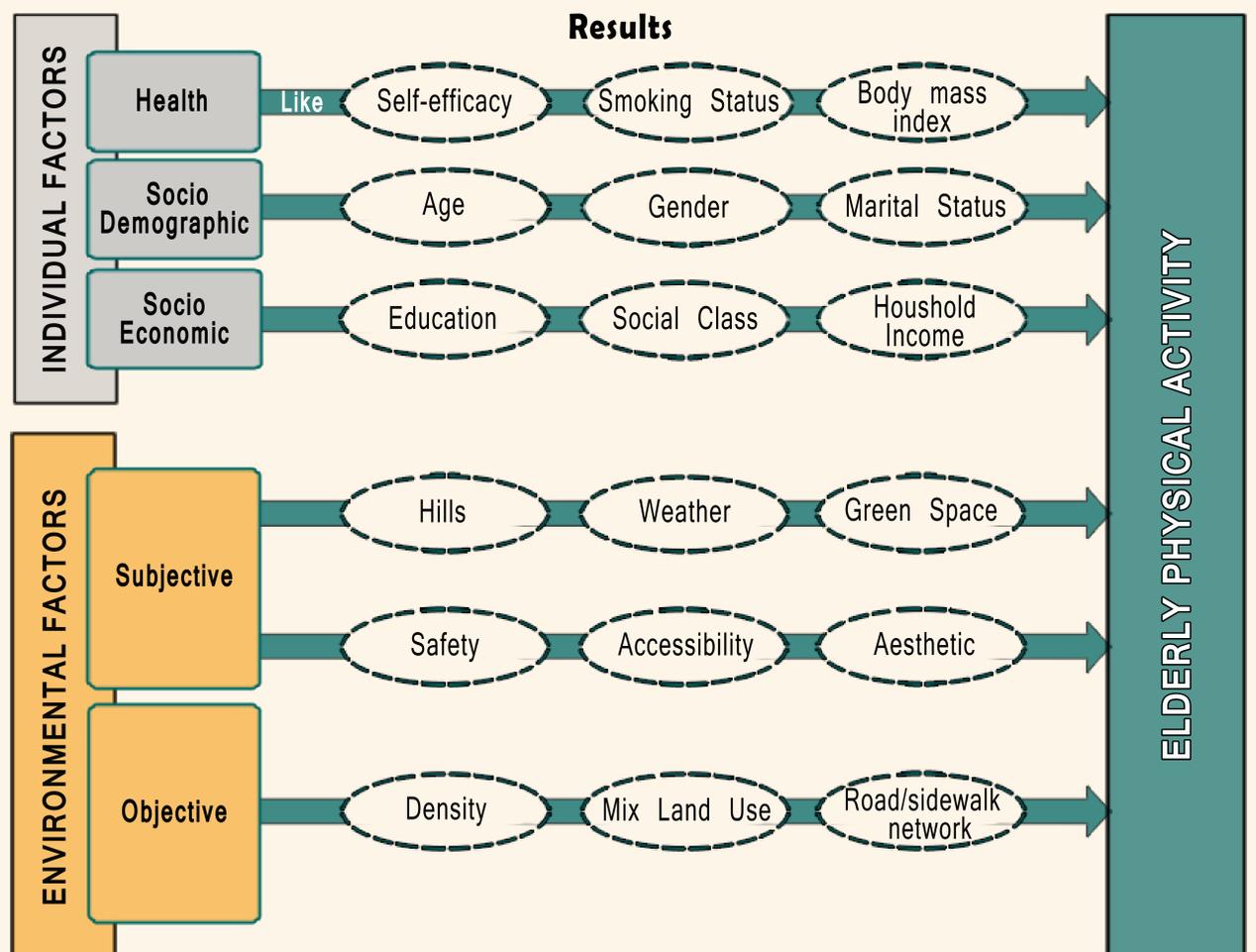
Methodology

A methodological literature search of two scientific databases ('Web of Science' and 'PubMed') yielded 25 English articles published between 2000 and 2011. Keyword search terms were 'built environment' and 'elderly', 'older adults', 'aging', 'physical activity' or 'walking' and 'neighbourhood'.

Inclusion criteria were (1) a study population consisting of adults who were over 65, (2) objective or subjective measurement of the built environment and (3) disclosure of the relationship between the built environment and physical activity in the elderly.

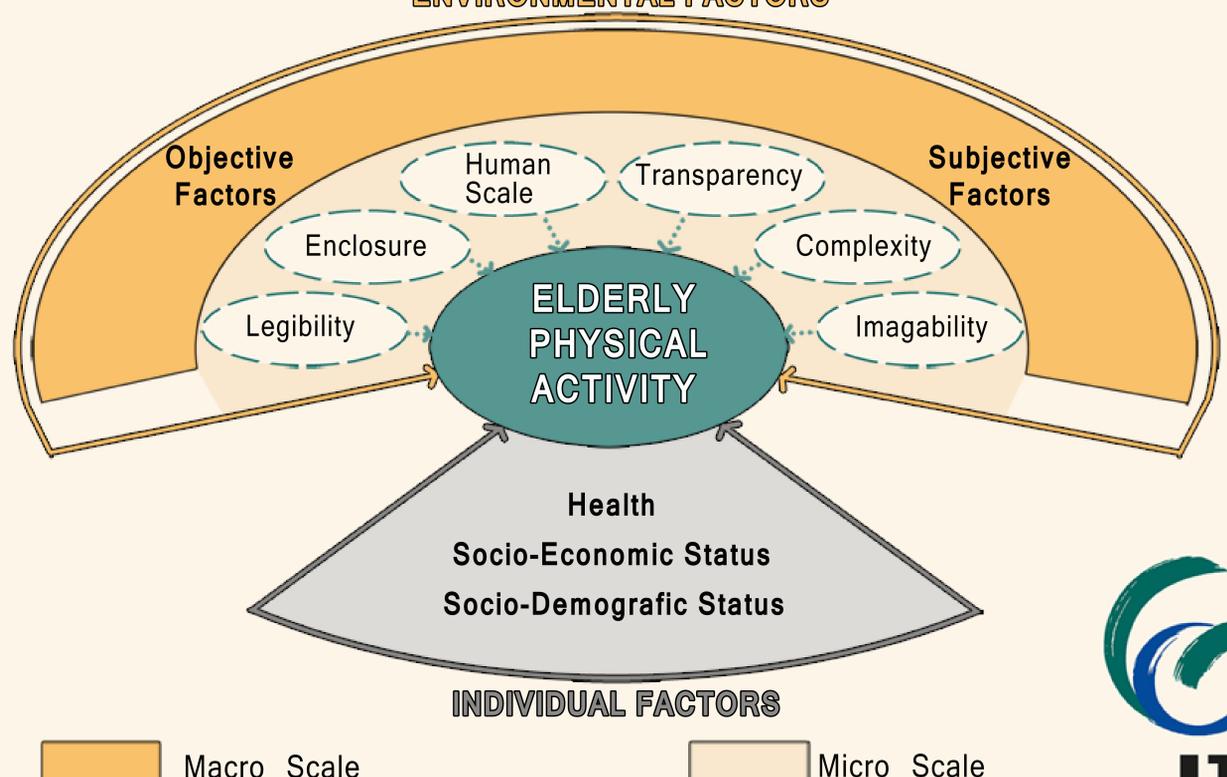
Conclusion

Close scrutiny from an Urban Planning Perspective reveals that the impact of other environmental factors have been overlooked at the micro and macro urban-scale. At the micro-scale, urban design factors such as enclosure, human scale and legibility have been neglected. Also, at the macro-scale, the impacts of environmental variations in different parts of the city and their affect on physical activity on the elderly have not been well established.



Discussion

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS



For more information:

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