

Helping older employees stay in their jobs

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Factors that can hinder older employees from continuing to work include workload, a poor memory and the pensionable age-effect. The Job-Exposure Matrix is a newly developed instrument that provides an easy way to chart the workload of older employees. Kelly Rijs investigated how people experience their own health at the end of their career and the influence of the pensionable age on this. Rijs defended her doctoral thesis on 20 November 2014 at the VU Medical Center.

Labour market participation is increasing

The labour market participation of older [employees](#) is expected to increase in the future. There are various characteristics of work that hinder older employees, such as the physical workload and the social working environment. Kelly Rijs developed an instrument (a so-called Job-Exposure Matrix) provides an easy way to chart such work characteristics.

A Job-Exposure Matrix (JEM) is a grid of work characteristics with professions. It is a frequently used instrument to chart work characteristics but a JEM especially for older employees in the Netherlands, which not only includes physical and psychosocial workload (such as high work pressure) but also psychosocial work-supporting resources (such as autonomy and support from colleagues), did not exist yet. "With this instrument we can obtain new insights into the work situation of older employees. We will then be in a better position to provide appropriate help when it is needed", says Rijs.

Detecting a poor memory faster

Rijs also discovered that complaints about a [poor memory](#) in relatively young people (55 to 64-year-olds) can detect a poor memory. By offering appropriate lifestyle changes, for example, these people can continue to work for longer. Rijs: "To help working 55 to 64- year-olds with a poor memory, you must first of all identify this group. From this thesis it is clear that a simple question (Do you experience any memory problems? Yes/No) about memory problems is enough as a first step for identifying this group. However, due consideration needs to be given to other factors that predict [memory problems](#), such as cognitive [workload](#)". These are, for example, tasks that demand a high level of concentration.

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