‘Openability’ of food and beverage packaging has been shown to be problematic for older consumers.

Pressure on resources has seen the use of packaged food and beverages increase in hospitals. Studies at the University of Wollongong (UOW) have shown that not only is hospital food and beverage packaging problematic, but difficulty opening it has been identified as a barrier to nutritional intake.

Given the serious nature of the problem, a series of studies have been undertaken by the UOW and Sheffield Hallam University to evaluate issues surrounding the openability of this packaging in an attempt to understand these issues in detail.

Water bottles, drink cartons and cheese portions were among the poorest performing packs.

While issues surrounding strength were seen to be linked to access to bottled water, all other pack types were significantly affected by dexterity and, in particular, the fine control needed to pinch and peel tabs or remove drinking straws.

Sound ergonomics indicates that products should be designed for the user population, yet the experience of our consumers indicates that this is not necessarily the case.

Work is ongoing to understand in more detail the effects of ageing such a reduced dexterity on packaging openability as well as the effects of age and posture.

The eventual aim of this work is to collaborate with packaging designers, manufacturers and brand owners to develop and produce effective and reliable packaging for both the healthcare and retail environments.

SPEAKER: Dr Alaster Yoxall, Engineering Design Principal/Research Fellow, Art and Design Research Centre, Sheffield Hallam University, UK

Dr Yoxall is a member of Lab4Living - a team of inter-disciplinary researchers and ‘end users’ - who are seeking to develop environments and propose creative strategies for future living in which people of all ages and abilities ‘not merely survive’ but are enabled and empowered to live with dignity, independence and fulfilment.

http://research.shu.ac.uk/lab4living/about/people/dr-alaster-yoxall

When: Wednesday 2 July 2014
Where: Building 35, Room G20

Program
12.15pm: Lunch (sandwiches and drinks)
12.45-2pm: Presentation and interactive discussion.

Parking: Carpark P8 or UOW “Sports Hub” behind the URAC Sports Centre, Building 13 (fees will be charged).

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