

2014

## Exploring "openability" of hospital food and beverage packaging by "well elderly"

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### Recommended Citation

Bell, Alison; Walton, Karen; Chevis, Jacqueline; and Yoxall, Alaster, "Exploring "openability" of hospital food and beverage packaging by "well elderly"" (2014). *Faculty of Social Sciences - Papers*. 1385.  
<https://ro.uow.edu.au/sspapers/1385>

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### Abstract

Abstract presented at The Fourth International Conference on Food Studies, 20-21 October 2014, Prato, Italy

### Keywords

elderly, well, packaging, beverage, food, openability, hospital, exploring

### Disciplines

Education | Social and Behavioral Sciences

### Publication Details

Bell, A., Walton, K., Chevis, J. & Yoxall, A. (2014). Exploring "openability" of hospital food and beverage packaging by "well elderly". Fourth International Conference on Food Studies (p. 29). Champaign, United States: Common Ground Publishing.

## **Exploring "Openability" of Hospital Food and Beverage Packaging by "Well Elderly"**

Food and beverage packaging has been identified as a contributing factor to malnutrition among elderly patients in hospitals. This research presented a range of hospital food and beverage packaging to a sample of community living independent elderly people over the age of 65 years. The objectives of the study were three fold: 1. to identify the most 'problematic' packaging from the users' perspective; 2. investigate the effect of hand strength on the ability to open the packaging; 3. survey users on the 'openability' of the packaging.

The study was conducted in regional and rural NSW, Australia. Participants (41 elderly independently living people aged over 65 years) were recruited from three community settings. Data were collected using interviews, questionnaires, observations and grip and pinch strength testing. Several food and beverage packages were found difficult to open: water bottles, tetra packs, fruit cups, boxed cereals, desserts, biscuit portions, diet jellies and cheeses being the most difficult. The difficulties were attributed to 'fiddly' packaging, lack of instruction/visibility of instructions, tab size and texture of wrap. Hospital food and beverage packaging should be designed to enable all users to open it in order to access nutrition essential for recovery.