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Rediscovering why I do what I do: the benefits of explaining ergonomics to researchers from different disciplines - a personal reflection on a PhD journey

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Abstract

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Rediscovering why I do what I do: the benefits of explaining ergonomics to researchers from different disciplines – a personal reflection on a PhD journey

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Collaborative cross discipline research requires the Ergonomist/Human Factors researcher to explain and justify their methods. This paper discusses the basis to ergonomics enquiry– the balancing of quantitative and qualitative approaches that form the foundation to our discipline. Through a personal research journey, the author will discuss the socially situated practice of ergonomics and its 'holistic approach to understanding complex interacting systems involving people.' (Wilson, 2000). 'Why we do what we do as ergonomists' will be explored using the author's PhD research in hospital food and beverage packaging and older people to demonstrate the basis application and benefit of an integrated methodology approach, the strength of an ergonomics method of enquiry. Using Wilson (2000) and Wilson & Hignett (2004), this paper will explore and discuss the ethnographic basis of ergonomics: the human's experiences of products, systems and environments; and the measurement of that experience; highlighting the art and science of ergonomics.

This presentation will allow you to reflect on 'why you do what you do as an ergonomist' whether in formal research or in work-related enquiry.

By understanding and articulating our discipline's foundational roots in qualitative and quantitative approaches, we are able to confidently state and demonstrate the value we can bring to the examination and resolution of complex problems.

Presenting author biography: PhD; MSc (Research); B App Sc (OT); G Dip Safety Sc; G Cert Health Sc (Education); Cert IV Workplace Assessment & Training; CPE. Alison has a varied career, working initially as a clinical Occupational Therapist in Australia and the UK and then the field of Occupational Health and Safety for 30 years, with roles in injury management, safety management, workers compensation, ergonomics and human factors. Alison is involved in a wide variety of work related research. Her personal research centres on food and beverage packaging openability in institutional settings. Alison is passionate about ergonomics and its application across different domains.

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