

GERT Suit Immersion Project

Alex Bishop, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Human Development Family Science

Gina Peek, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and OCES State Housing and Consumer Specialist
Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

Rebecca Nelson
Undergraduate Research Assistant
Human Development and Family Science

Introduction

Declines in physical, mental, and social function are a normal part of aging. Most people expect to grow old. Some might not fully realize how aging impacts well-being. In order to age well, it is best to achieve a balance between a good versus bad aging experience.

Purpose

The purpose of the GERT Suit Project was to create a hands-on aging experience. The GERT suit changes sensory and physical functioning and is designed to give caregivers a realistic view of aging.

Methods

Human Sciences faculty met with a total of 28 participants. The study was held at the 2017 Oklahoma Home and Community Education (OHCE) meetings. All participants took a pre-survey. Then, participants put on the GERT suit. Three tasks were completed. Finally, participants took a post-survey.

Results

Participants benefited from the GERT Suit Project. The GERT suit changed participant views regarding aging. Participants felt the decline that comes with aging. Feelings of empathy increased. The participants were more aware of what older adults' experience.

Conclusions

The GERT Suit Project promotes aging education and awareness. Completing tasks while wearing the GERT Suit can improve the lens by which persons view the impact of the aging process on self and others.