Laboratory focus

The research of the Participation, Environment and Performance Laboratory (PEPL) focuses on the unique contribution that the environment can make toward improving the performance, participation and quality of life for persons living with functional limitations. Dr. Stark and her team study how the environment accounts for the differences between what individuals are capable of doing and their actual participation in society. An exploration of the physical environment as influencing behavior is the basis of research questions designed to explore the impact of the person/environment interface. The lab studies older adults living in the community.

The lab collaborates with interdisciplinary research scientists in the Knight Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center, the Institute for Clinical Translational Science and the Friedman Center for Aging. The lab has a strong community-engaged component, including a strong network of community partners.

Mechanisms explored in laboratory

1. Fall prevention
2. Home modifications
3. Medication management
4. Aging
5. Participation

Contributions to rehabilitation science

Dr. Stark’s work in the community focuses on the development and implementation of evidence-based behavioral interventions to prevent falls and improve community participation. Her federally and privately funded studies explore how functional decline and environmental barriers interact to influence the performance of frail older adults with chronic conditions. The interventions she develops from these studies allow older adults to age in place independently and safely at home.

Dr. Stark is committed to translating and disseminating research findings to clinicians to implement evidence-based interventions. She was a collaborator on the revision of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), with specific expertise in the domains of activity, participation and environment. Dr. Stark also contributed to the development of a set of instruments to measure the ICF domains of activity, participation and environment in the home and community. She is a strong proponent of inter-professional education to improve health and research outcomes and has worked on and led several successful inter-professional research teams.

Current and recent funding

Title: COMPASS: A novel transition program to reduce disability after stroke
Principal Investigator: Susy Stark, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
Co-Investigator: Alex Wong, PhD, DPhil, BIOT
Funding Source: RO1HD092398 NHICHD NCMRR
Project Period: 8/28/17-5/31/22
Total Award: $1,354,946

Title: Building capacity to improve community participation for people aging with long-term disability through evidence-based strategies
Principal Investigator: Susy Stark, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
Co-Investigator: Kerri Morgan, PhD, OTR/L, ATP
Funding Source: 90DP00011 DHHS ACL, NIDILRR
Disability Research Projects Community Living & Participation
Project Period: 9/30/17-9/29/22
Total Award: $2,482,013

Title: Removing Home Hazards for Older Adults (HARP)
Principal Investigator: Susy Stark, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
Funding Source: US HUD MOHHU0024-14
Project Period: 11/14/14-11/16/17
Total Award: $724,996

Representative publications


