



# A dynamic concept of health and its relation with the ICF

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**Abstract** Recently the new, dynamic concept of health that was introduced in BMJ in 2011 was operationalized in six dimensions and 32 aspects of health. The linking rules of Cieza et al. were used to link these aspects to the ICF. Of the 46 meaningful concepts found, 42 (91,3%) could be coded as body function, activity / participation, environmental factor or personal factor. The high percentage of concepts that could be coded as personal factor, emphasizes the importance of these factors in the experience of health and for their inclusion in future versions of the ICF.

## Background

In 2009 an invitational conference of international health experts was held in the Netherlands to discuss an adaptation of the 1948 WHO definition of health. The conference resulted in an article in the British Medical Journal (Huber et al. 2011) in which a new, dynamic concept of health was introduced:

**'Health as the ability to adapt and to self manage, in the face of social, physical and emotional challenges.'**

## Method

In 2013 the results were presented of a follow-up study to operationalize this general concept 'bottom-up' (Huber et al. 2013).

The 556 observations found in a qualitative study about health indicators, were categorized into six **dimensions of health**:

1. bodily functions
2. mental functions and perceptions
3. spiritual dimension
4. quality of life
5. social and societal participation
6. daily functioning.

The six dimensions are specified in 32 different **aspects** of health.

E.g. dimension 2 'mental functions and perceptions' is specified in the following six aspects:

- cognitive functioning;
- emotional state;
- self respect;
- experience of being in charge;
- self management; and
- resilience.

To study the relation between these aspects and the domains and classes of the ICF, the aspects were linked to the most appropriate ICF-categories using the linking rules of Cieza et al. (2005).

## Results

Of the resulting 46 meaningful concepts, 42 (91,3%) could be linked to the ICF:

- 18 are coded as personal factor (39,1%) (Heerkens & Huber 2013);
- 15 (32,6%) are coded as activity or participation;
- 8 (17,4%) are coded as a body function; and
- 1 meaningful concept (2,2%) is coded as an environmental factor.

Four meaningful concepts (8,7%) could not be linked to the ICF; they are related to a disease / disorder (coded as health condition) or to a medical procedure.

The personal factors identified are presented in the table.

Dimensions	18 aspects / meaningful concepts coded as personal factor
2. Mental functions and perceptions	Esteem / self respect
	Experience of being in charge / feelings of control
	Self management
3. Spiritual dimension	Resilience / sense of coherence
	Giving meaning (to) / meaningfulness
	Striving for ideals / pursuing goals
4. Quality of life	Future prospects
	Acceptance
	Quality of life / well being
	Being happy / experiencing happiness
	Enjoyment
5. Social and societal participation	Perceived health
	Feeling good / flourishing
	Zest for life
	Being in balance
	Experiencing relationships as meaningful
	Societal involvement
	Having a meaningful job

## Discussion

Personal factors are important in defining health; almost 40% of the meaningful concepts related to health are coded as personal factors. This is an additional argument to add a list of personal factors to future versions of the ICF (see also Geyh et al. 2011; Heerkens et al. 2012).

Instruments to measure the different aspects of health can be selected based on the linking of their items to ICF-codes.

## Contact

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