HEARING LOSS MATTERS
AKA: HEAR FOR THE HEALTH OF IT!

By: Mary Bauer, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division, DHS

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HEARING LOSS MATTERS
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Presenter: Mary Bauer | Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist
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GOALS FOR TODAY

• Acquire an increased awareness to the growing number of adults and seniors with hearing loss.

• Learn a minimum of 3 negative consequences of untreated hearing loss in seniors.

• Identify 3 effective communication strategies to use when communicating with a senior with hearing loss.

• Learn about both low cost and no cost solutions that can enhance and improve communication during 1:1 conversations and in smaller and larger group settings.
YOUR TURN!

When ranking chronic physical conditions, hearing loss comes in at:

A. First place  
B. Third place  
C. Fifth place  
D. Tenth place  
E. None of the above

THESE FACTS MAY SURPRISE YOU

• About 20% of the population in the United States has hearing loss. (Johns Hopkins Medicine)

• Only 16% of physicians routinely screen for hearing loss (Center for Hearing and Communication)

• The time between when a person gets an initial diagnosis of a hearing loss and receives his/her first hearing aid(s) is 10+ years. (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association)

• Most people delay treatment until they cannot communicate even in the best of listening situations. (Davis, Smith, Ferguson, Stephens, & Gianopoulos, 2007)
HOW MANY OLDER AMERICANS HAVE A HEARING LOSS?

• One in three people between ages 65 and 74 have a hearing loss

• One in two people over the age of 75 have a hearing loss

(National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, 2010)

VOLUME MANAGEMENT – IMBEDDED SOUND CLIP
How do you think you did?

A. I’m pretty sure I got 80% or more of them right!
B. Maybe I got half of them right...
C. I’d be lucky if I got one or two of them correct!
D. Yikes! There were actual words?
IF YOU HAD AN UNTREATED HEARING LOSS LIKE YOU JUST HEARD:

• How would you feel **physically**?

• How might this affect your **behavior**?

• How might you react **socially**?

• How would you feel **emotionally**?

“Hearing loss is not a life-threatening condition but it is or can be life-changing or life-destroying.”

Randy Collins, Arizona Technology Access Program

WHY IS HEARING LOSS OFTEN LEFT UNTREATED?

There are many reasons why, but probably the most significant ones are:

1. Believe that hearing loss isn’t a big deal – it’s part of the aging process & is to be expected ("You don’t **die** from having a hearing loss!");

2. Think there is nothing that can be done about it;

3. Cannot afford the cost of hearing aids;

4. People who provide their care, significant others and family members aren’t talking about it;

5. Unaware of the latest research about possible consequences of untreated hearing loss.
Untreated hearing loss has been linked to:

A. Higher risk of dementia  
B. Greater chance of falling  
C. Increased isolation and depression  
D. All of the above  
E. A & C

Hearing Loss in Older Adults Tied to More Hospitalizations and Poorer Physical and Mental Health

Release Date: June 11, 2013

Older adults with hearing loss are more likely than peers with normal hearing to require hospitalization and suffer from periods of inactivity and depression, according to results of a new study by experts at Johns Hopkins.
JOHNS HOPKINS – STUDIES HAVE LINKED UNTREATED HEARING LOSS TO:

- Increased risk of developing dementia and Alzheimer’s
  - Mild hearing loss = twice as likely
  - Moderate hearing loss = three times as likely
  - Severe hearing loss = five times as likely
- Cognitive abilities declined 30-40% faster
  (3.2 years sooner than those without hearing loss)
- About a three-fold increased chance of having falls with a mild hearing loss
- For those 70 and older: 32% more admissions to a hospital; 36% more likely to have stretches of illness or injury lasting more than 10 days; 57% more likely to have deep episodes of stress, depression or bad mood (for more than 10 days)

MORE STUDIES AND UNTREATED HEARING LOSS

- Significantly higher rates of social isolation, depression, anxiety, and other psychosocial disorders (National Council on Aging)
- Three-times higher risk of falls (Finland – Hearing as a Predictor of Falls and Postural Balance in Older Female Twins)
- Accelerated gray matter atrophy in auditory areas of the brain and increased listening effort necessary to successfully comprehend speech (Perelman School of Medicine – University of Pennsylvania)
- Negative impact on independence by increasing reliance on community or family support (Australia – Blue Mountains Hearing Study)
WHY IS UNTREATED HEARING LOSS LINKED TO THESE THINGS?

Researchers hypothesize it could be because of:

- Constant load on the brain
- Faster changes of the brain structure
- Social isolation

NOW WHAT?
SCREENING TOOL

Hearing Handicap Inventory in the Elderly Screening Version (HHIE-S or HHIA):
- A 10-item questionnaire to assess how an individual perceives the social and emotional effects of hearing loss
- Widely used since the ‘80s (The original HHIE was developed in 1982 with 25-questions)
- Designed to be used with non-institutionalized older adults
- Usually administered in a face-to-face interview
- Is considered a reliable screening tool

Examples:
(E) Does a hearing problem cause you to feel embarrassed when meeting new people?
   Yes (4 points)  Sometimes (2 points)  No (1 point)

(S) Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when visiting friends, relatives, or neighbors?
   Yes (4 points)  Sometimes (2 points)  No (1 point)
The only adequate way to address hearing loss is with hearing aids.

A. True
B. False

A WORD ABOUT HEARING AIDS

Hearing aids are a common and very often, an effective way to address hearing loss. However – they are NOT the only way to address it.

Let’s look at some low and no cost options.
USING A SMARTPHONE AS AN ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICE

Apps:  
- iPhone/iPad  
  • HearYouNow  
  • BioAid  
  • Jacoti ListenApp  
  • TV Louder  
- Android  
  • Hearing Aid Replay Lite


Assistive Listening Devices

- Personal Amplifiers
- Personal Infrared
- Personal FM
- Personal Sound Amplification Products (PSAPs)
OVER-THE-COUNTER HEARING AID ACT OF 2017

- Signed into law by President Trump on August 18, 2017.
- Requires the FDA to create a new category of hearing aids for consumers with mild to moderate hearing loss.
- Requires that the FDA regulations include specific requirements regarding patient safety and efficacy of over-the-counter hearing aids.
- Would make hearing devices affordable for millions of Americans who cannot currently afford them.
- Probably won’t see wide-spread sales of OTC hearing aids for a few years. However, we are already seeing some hearing aids being sold over the Internet or by calling a 1-800 number that are much (MUCH) more affordable than “traditional” hearing aids.
ASSISTIVE LISTENING SYSTEMS

- FM System
- Infrared System
- Audio Induction Loop System

VOLUME MANAGEMENT — LIVE VOICE
TELEPHONE EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM (TED)

- TED provides telephone equipment to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, speech impaired or have a physical disability and need adaptive equipment in order to use the phone.

- DHS loans the equipment at no cost for as long as the person needs the equipment.

- For information about TED go to: mn.gov/dhs/ted-program/

ALERTING DEVICES WITH LIGHT / VIBRATION / SOUND (AMPLIFIED & LOWER PITCH)

- Alarm clock
- Baby Cry
- Carbon Monoxide Detector
- Doorbell
- Weather Radio
- Smoke Alarm
- And More...

Don’t forget APPS!

- Braci Pro (Android)
- MyEardroid (Android)
- Otosense (iPhone/iPad and Android)

Larry Medwetsky, Mobile Device Apps for People with Hearing Loss, Hearing Loss Magazine, November/December 2015
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

THE SPEAKER

• Get the listener’s attention
• Face the listener so the person can see your face & mouth
• Use natural facial expressions and hand gestures
• Talk at your normal volume (shouting just makes it look like you’re angry and distorts the sound)
• Monitor background noise and lighting conditions

From Dr. Samuel Trychin, Ph.D.
USE CLEAR SPEECH

1. Accurate and fully formed.
2. Naturally slower (this happens automatically when you attempt to be clearer).
3. Naturally louder (your voice automatically increases in volume when you attempt to be clearer).
4. Lively, with a full range of voice intonation (tone) and stress on key words.
5. Characterized by pauses between all phrases and sentences.

From Oticon Hearing Aids:
COMMUNICATION is a Two Way Street

THE LISTENER
(THE PERSON WITH THE HEARING LOSS)

• If available, wear hearing aids or use an assistive listening device
• Inform others what will help in the communication process
• Don’t bluff
• Confirm what was heard
• Set realistic goals for understanding

From Dr. Samuel Trychin, Ph.D.
THE ENVIRONMENT

Think about:

• Reverberation
• Sight lines
• Lighting
• Competing sounds
• Distance

ANY FINAL QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?
A FINAL THOUGHT

“The price of doing the same old thing is far higher than the price of change.”

- Bill Clinton

DEAF & HARD OF HEARING SERVICES

Go to: mn.gov/dhs/deaf-hard-of-hearing/
and click on “Contact us” to find the
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services office serving your area

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