

How do Audiologists encourage hearing aid compliance in younger adults aged 18-25 compared to adults aged over 65?

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BACKGROUND

- Audiologists recommend continued full-time wear of hearing aids to overcome auditory deprivation through acclimatization and adaptation [1]. Hearing aids have been well-documented in literature. Continued hearing aids use over long periods correlates well with hearing aids satisfaction and improvement in quality of life [2].
- In the United Kingdom, there are a substantial number of patients who do not wear their hearing aids.
- Hearing healthcare professionals have the potential to significantly improve patients' compliance with their hearing aids. Previous studies on hearing aids identified the value of patient-clinician interactions in motivating hearing aid use [3].
- Enforcing hearing aid compliance can provide a considerable challenge for Audiologists as they may interpret low compliance or rejection of hearing aids as indicative of broader hearing aids rehabilitation-related concerns.
- Literature shows differences in age between patients can have implications for hearing care and hearing aids rehabilitative intervention, therefore further research needs to be done to look at how non-compliance of hearing aids and reasons for non-use vary between different ages.
- Previous research studies have focused more on the hearing aid compliance of people who are 65 years and over. There are very few studies that focus on the hearing aid compliance in younger adults.

AIMS

- To explore audiologists' thoughts and perspectives on:
- age differences and its implications for hearing care and rehabilitation
 - how audiologists encourage hearing aid compliance in different age groups

METHODS

RECRUITMENT

Purposive sampling via advertising through professional contacts, networks and outreach emails.

PARTICIPANTS

18 Audiologists working in Adult Audiology hearing rehabilitation on the NHS or privately in the UK.

DATA COLLECTION

Semi-structured, one to one interviews, either face to face or remotely.

DATA ANALYSIS

Interviews were voice-recorded, transcribed and analysed using inductive thematic analysis.

FINDINGS



Clinical Tools

"Simulated the hearing test through free field speaker and made them hear how they are hearing"
"you can show them like the speech banana, you can reflect back on certain speech sounds hearing aids they would be missing out on."
"I also like to give demos of hearing aids, I usually put it on myself when I'm doing the appointment."

Fine-tuning

"Highlighting that the memory on the hearing aid is a data log that we observe makes them think 'okay, I'm going to wear hearing aids more'. The older patients above age 60 listen when we tell them about this"
"I'll use the auto-acclimatization feature over a month for older patients."

Rapport

"With younger adults, I try to encourage them to use the hearing aid, try to make them feel that they are not alone, that there are other people younger than their age using hearing aids so they feel that they accept that it's better to have the hearing aid."

Fine-tuning

"I try to encourage baby steps where you can use the adaptation manager on the hearing aids to help the person get used to it."

Technology

"Gauge how comfortable patients are with technology. So if they are quite keen on technology, sometimes I'll use the technology side to sell the hearing aid a little bit."

Acceptance of Hearing loss

"Patients over the age of 65 always strongly believe they can blame everyone else for their hearing problems. This is down to the social era now versus the social era before."
"I feel acceptance is like a very big thing in both age groups."

Technology

"Younger people are more familiar with technology compared with older people. Younger people are used to hearing things in their ears when listening to music so hearing aid devices in the ear are not uncommon for younger people."
"Older people are not familiar with technology and feel more scared or reluctant to learn."

Motivation

"It depends whether they are a new hearing aid user or long-term hearing aid user, so when they are fitted in at young age, they're also a lot more motivated."

Audiological Influence

"The method or attention to the fitting process is the same for different age groups"
"There's a big difference in age groups with hearing aid usage. Usage depends on the severity of the hearing loss and the patients motivation to wear them."

Technology
"Patients would have grown up with different levels of hearing aid availability and levels of technology."

Do you feel that age differences have important implications for hearing care and adult hearing rehabilitation?

Aesthetics
"A lot of younger people don't particularly want to be seen with a hearing aid just because the stigma of wearing a hearing aid."

Lifestyle

"Age will play a factor in in terms of what stage the person is in their life, and this will also affect the kind of care you give them."

Acceptance of Hearing loss
"It depends how much they accept their hearing loss as opposed to the hearing aids, so I don't think the age is necessarily a factor from my experience."

Do you feel there is a difference in hearing aid compliance in different age groups, young (18-25) versus old (over 65)?

Lifestyle

"Younger people who are more active, social and are in full-time education and have jobs will experience more complex listening situations."
"Older people who are less active in their social life are less likely to seek help for their hearing and tend not to wear hearing aids."

Audiological Influence
"In older people, its more about whether they can put the hearing aid in themselves and use the it independently"
"I think that if a person has hearing loss that is moderate to severe, they will rely on their hearing aid compared to someone who does not have a significant hearing loss."

Stigma

"People aged between 18 to 25 tend not to wear hearing aids as they feel that it signals to other people that they are unable to do any work."
"especially people around age 65. They are reluctant to wear hearing aids because they feel like this is an indicator that they're getting really old."

What things do you do during your appointments to encourage hearing aid compliance in your patients?

Information

"It is important to pick out information about what kind of communication environments are important and the communication partners patients have".
"I talk about neuroplasticity and the stimulation of the hair cells in the cochlea".

Rapport

"I try to ensure that the patient follows up with myself again so I can see how they're getting on with their hearing aids."
"Making sure the patient is happy with their device is really important too."

During your appointments, is there anything you would say or do differently to younger adults (18-25) than you would to older adults (over 65)?

Counselling

"I would definitely focus a lot more on management and usage counselling with older adults because that seems to be the priority."

Technology

"With young adults, I like to focus more on technology bases as hearing aids have Bluetooth now. Focussing on this aspect kind of shifts the patients attention away from the mindset that hearing aids help them hear."

CONCLUSIONS

- While previous hearing aid research focused on patient viewpoints, this study contributes to the literature by offering fresh perspectives of Audiologists.
- Different themes emerged from the qualitative data. Majority of audiologists encourage hearing aid compliance differently in young and old adults.
- The interview data shows that audiologists face considerable challenges relating to different factors affecting hearing aid compliance in different age groups including lifestyle, stigma, technology, acceptance and audiological influences.
- Reasons for non-compliance of hearing aids in older adults seems to be multifactorial. The process of hearing rehabilitation seems complex and extensive in older adults and cannot be resolved by only issuing hearing aids.
- The four key themes for strategies employed by audiologists to promote hearing aids compliance between age groups include technology, counselling strategies, fine-tuning and rapport.
- Technology was the most common theme that emerged from the data analysis, highlighting its importance towards the relationship between hearing aid compliance and age.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This research yields important insights into the knowledge that currently exists and will help direct future research towards modifying the patient care plan to improve rearing rehabilitation outcomes for older and younger adults alike.

Further investigation of user perspectives is required to fully comprehend the influence of age on hearing aid compliance and proactively adapt education/training of audiologists to improve hearing rearing rehabilitation outcomes for both age groups.



References

- [1] Shearing aidspro, D.Z. (2022). Why should you wear hearing aids all day long?, Audiology Island. Available at: <https://audiologyisland.com/blog/wearing-hearing-aids-all-day/>.
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- [3] Johnson, C.E., Jilla, A.M. and Danhearingaids, J.L., (2018). Developing foundational counselling skills for addressing adherence issues in auditory rearing rehabilitation. In Seminars in Hearing (Vol. 39, No. 01, pp. 013-031). Theme Medical Publishers.