Follow-on impact of introducing a brief cognitive assessment for older adults attending hearing aid appointments

Eleanor Davies, Rohani Omar, Noah Scott-Fielder, Roulla Katiri, Takoda Mountains, Diya Vaid, James Crawley, Cherelle Gordon-Lewis, Sergi G Costafreda, Anne GM Schilder

University College London Ear Institute and Division of Psychiatry, NIHR University College London Hospitals Biomedical Research Centre

Background

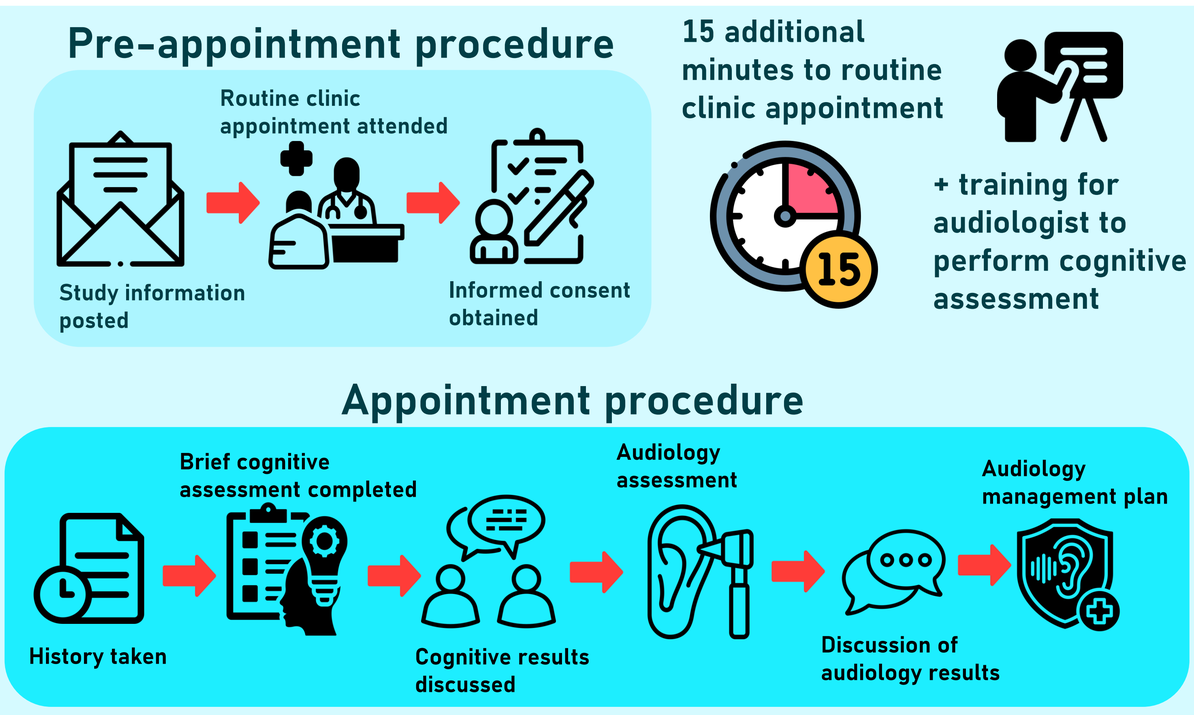
Adult-onset hearing loss is a risk factor for dementia, yet audiologists rarely address cognitive health in the appointments with older adults. We performed a pilot study introducing a brief cognitive assessment in routine hearing aid appointments for older adults.

Aim

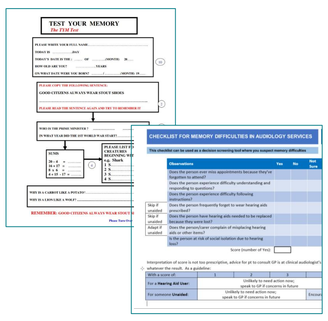
To assess impact and follow-on actions at 3 months after performing brief cognitive assessment in hearing aid appointments.

Methodology

- Pilot study conducted in routine hearing aid assessment clinics at University College London Hospital (UCLH)
- Patients aged ≥60 years without a diagnosed cognitive impairment were eligible



- 15 minutes added to routine clinical appointments to facilitate brief cognitive assessment & discussion
- Trained audiologists administered either the Test Your Memory (TYM) or the Memory Checklist (MC)



- Research audiologist observed appointments, recording quantitative & qualitative outcome data

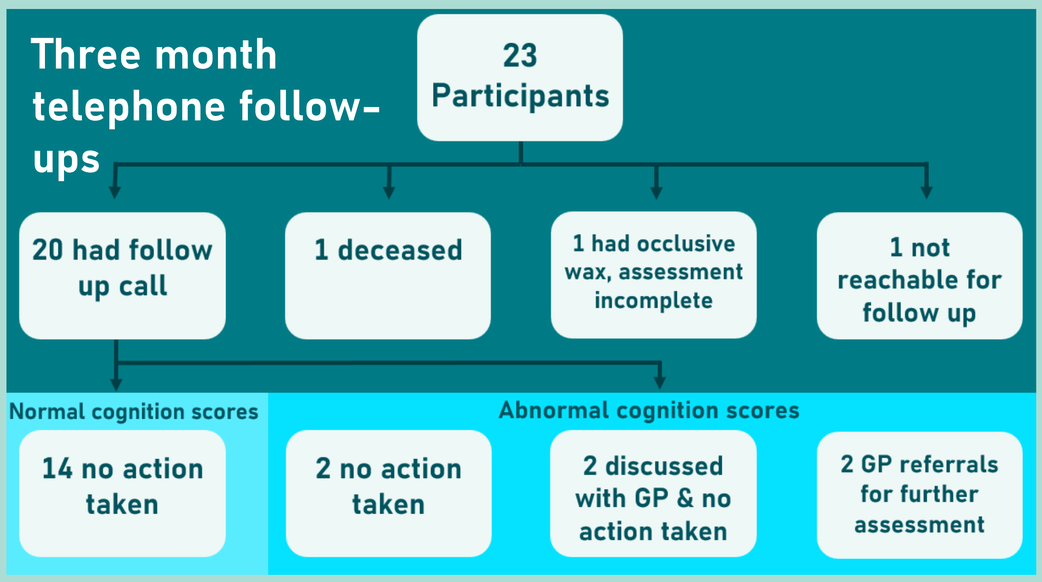
Three month telephone follow up to discuss:



- GP contact
- Experience
- Onward Actions
- Acceptability

Results

- Participants (n=23), 11:12 F:M, median age 64 years. Ethnically diverse
- All 23 participants completed cognitive screening (MC=11, TYM=12). Nine participants (39.1%) had scores indicating cognitive impairment on TYM, none had an abnormal score on MC
- Twenty completed 3-month follow-up
- Of the 6 patients with scores indicating cognitive impairment, 2 did not contact their GP as they did not have memory concerns; 2 agreed with their GP that no further action was required; 2 were referred and are awaiting formal memory clinic assessment



- 100% found the test "acceptable"/"very acceptable"

"Good opportunity to take that test at the audiology appointment...things need to be joined up in the NHS...if you have multiple conditions, we should be able to link them all up"

"Didn't feel concerned about memory, understood that GP is who to speak to if become concerned"

"Wasn't quite what I was hoping for, but it was useful to be brought to awareness. Very glad I took part"

"I tried to organise an appointment with my GP for a while now for other medical conditions"

Conclusion

Older adults attending NHS hearing aid appointments are typically accepting of completing a brief cognitive assessment at routine hearing appointments. Of patients who had a score indicating cognitive impairment, 2 were referred onwards for formal memory clinic assessment by GP. Introducing brief cognitive assessment in routine audiology appointments has the potential for earlier identification of cognitive problems and tailoring of audiological support for those identified, however there are significant resource implications and further research is required.

References

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2. Omar, R; Forbes, M; Vaid, D et al. (2025) Cognitive assessment in hearing aid clinics: Is it feasible to implement in a National Health Service (NHS) setting? Science Progress 2025-04, Vol. 108 (2)