

Implementing the EmpAQ-5 and Empowerment Clinical Tools to Enhance Client Empowerment in Clinical Practice: A Multi-Site Study

→ INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE SCENE

Integrating evidence-based tools into routine audiology remains challenging, especially when it requires shifts in workflow and hearing care professionals (HCPs) behaviour. The Empowerment in Audiology Questionnaire^{1,2,3}, EmpAQ-5, a brief 5-item measure, was designed to support empowerment-focused, person-centred care – but its success depends on effective, sustainable implementation. This study applied implementation science frameworks to:

- Test the feasibility of the EmpAQ-5 in real-world settings
- Identify barriers and enablers to adoption
- Evaluate facilitation strategies and sustainability

→ METHODS: PATH TO IMPLEMENTATION

A multi-centre, prospective mixed-methods study guided by the Quality Implementation Framework (QIF) and COM-B targeting clinician Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation; and then evaluated using the RE-AIM Framework (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, Maintenance).

- **Setting & Participants:** 10 audiology centres across Victoria and South Australia; 19 participants: HCPs, managers, and front-line staff
- **Data Collection:** Surveys: AIM, IAM, FIM, NOMAD (pre/post), HCP diaries, Exit interviews
- **Analysis:** Wilcoxon signed-rank tests (quantitative), reflexive thematic analysis (qualitative)

THE EmpAQ-5 IMPLEMENTATION JOURNEY: FROM CO-DESIGN TO CLINICAL INTEGRATION

This multi-centre study used a structured, six-phase rollout of the EmpAQ-5 across ten audiology clinics (July 2024–May 2025), guided by the Quality Implementation Framework (QIF). Drawing on RE-AIM and COM-B, the team co-designed resources, adapted workflows, and embedded feedback loops to support real-time learning. This stage-based approach enabled effective and meaningful integration of EmpAQ-5 into everyday clinical practice (Figure 1).

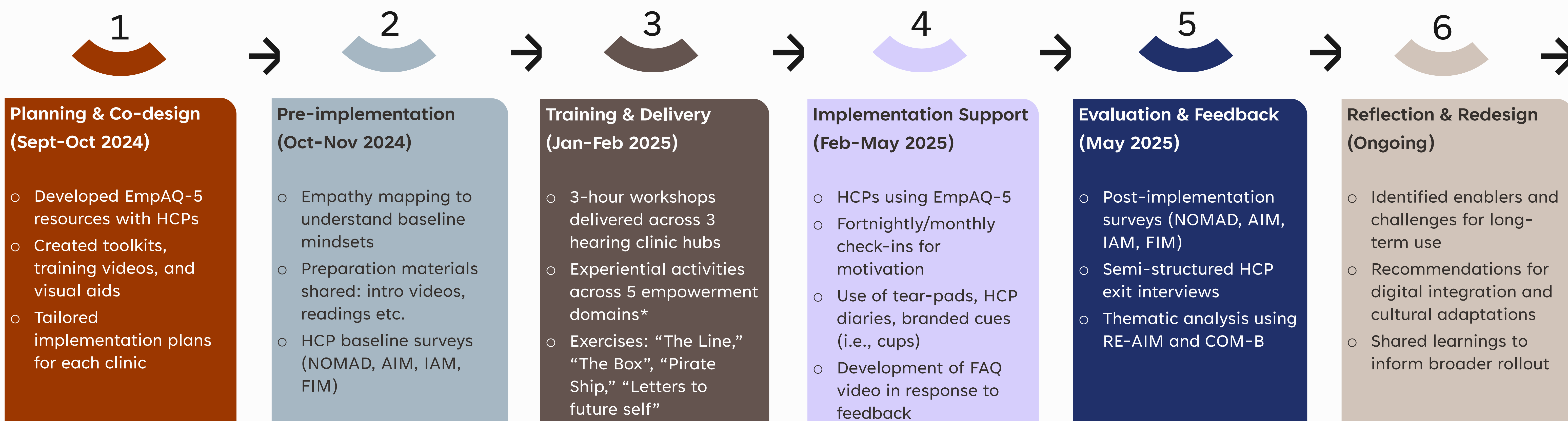


Figure 1. Overview of the 6 phases in the staged-based approach underpinned by Quality Implementation Framework. *Knowledge, Control, Participation, Skills & Strategies, Self-efficacy

WHAT CHANGED IN PRACTICE? RESULTS FROM A STRUCTURED ROLLOUT OF EmpAQ-5

The EmpAQ-5 was successfully integrated into routine clinical workflows in multiple settings. Implementation outcomes highlighted both measurable improvements and rich experiential insights from HCPs.

Hearing Care Professionals Voices (Qualitative)

HCPs reflected positively on the tool’s ability to deepen empowerment-based dialogue, but also shared barriers and suggestions for improved integration

Implementation Themes

- **Value:** Structured conversations enabled richer discussions and better goal-setting.
- **Timing:** More feasible in review appointments than initial consultations.
- **Barriers:** Included time constraints, empowerment (like “control”), and scoring confusion.
- **Enablers:** Visual prompts, peer-led clarification, and regular support check-ins.

“It highlighted things I already do – it spelled them out clearly.”

“Now I can categorise everything I do, and I love the word empowerment.”

“It gave me something more to work with during client reviews.”

“The video about control really helped... I felt better explaining it to clients.”

“I am still using EmpAQ 2-3 times/week (e.g., HSP Client Reviews), and also when I feel there are areas the client is hinting at re their wellbeing and psychosocial adjustment to their hearing issues.”

“Sometimes I did it and I got 130% and thought, ‘That’s very good.’”

“Bringing out the questionnaire helped them delve into their difficulties,”

“My manager was clearly behind it... and asked me to remind the others.”

“It was fairly instrumental in helping me understand empowerment.”

Measured Impact (Quantitative)

Pre/post data from 16 HCPs revealed significant improvements in perceived feasibility and appropriateness of the EmpAQ-5 post-implementation

Measure	Pre	Post	p-value	Result
Acceptability (AIM)	3.63	3.88	0.131	↑ Trend (NS)
Appropriateness (IAM)	3.25	4.00	0.030	↑ Significant
Feasibility (FIM)	3.50	4.00	0.034	↑ Significant

Key Insights

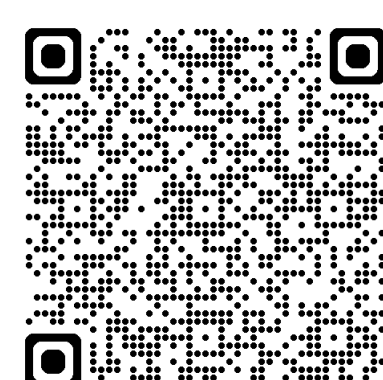
- Significant improvements in IAM and FIM; trend toward increased AIM
- 37% uptake in eligible sessions, most effective during review appointments
- Enhanced client empowerment conversations reported

→ CONCLUSION

The EmpAQ-5 was found to be feasible, appropriate, and acceptable in real-world audiology settings. This study is not just about a tool; it is about transforming care. It shows how thoughtful design, HCP engagement, and structured support can bring evidence-based innovations to life.

- The EmpAQ-5 is now more than a questionnaire, it is a catalyst for empowerment-focused care.

Link to ORCA Labs Empowerment Focus Area



1. Gotowiec S, et.al. (2022). Understanding patient empowerment along the hearing health journey. International Journal of Audiology, 61 (2) 148-158
2. Gotowiec S, et.al. (2023). Development of a self-report measure of empowerment along the hearing health journey: a content evaluation study. International Journal of Audiology, 63 (4) 275-285
3. Bennett R, et al. (2024). Empowerment Audiology Questionnaire: Rasch Analysis and Traditional Psychometric Evaluation. Ear & Hearing 45(3) 583-599



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