

'How-to' video tutorials could boost hearing aid use, say researchers

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(Medical Xpress) -- The main barriers to hearing aid use are being addressed by experts in Nottingham as part of an innovative research project.

Hearing aids have the potential to transform the lives of those with permanent [hearing loss](#), yet out of the three million people who have one, around 25 per cent — 750,000 people — choose not to wear their device.

Now researchers are offering easy-to-use, interactive video tutorials offering handy tips and advice in a bid to increase the chances of success for people using their hearing aids for the first time and make the most of their device.

If they are successful, the tutorials could be routinely given to patients receiving hearing aids on the NHS within the next three years.

The project and is being led by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) National Biomedical Research Unit in Hearing (NBRUH) and brings together expertise from researchers and leading clinicians from The University of Nottingham and Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust.

Significant barriers

Consultant clinical scientist Mel Ferguson, from Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, who is leading the study, said: “A huge amount of information is given to patients verbally when they receive their hearing aids, yet much of it is forgotten a few weeks later. Many problems that occur could be easily solved if only the patient knew what to do and often hearing aids end up in the proverbial ‘kitchen drawer’.”

In addition to issues with retaining the large amount of information given to users at their clinic appointment, there are other significant barriers to hearing aid use before patients even reach the referral stage.

Many hearing aid users have had difficulties in hearing for at least 10 years before they get a hearing aid citing many reasons for not seeking advice. These include perceiving their hearing to be ‘not that bad’, acceptance of hearing loss as a normal consequence of ageing, lack of awareness of that they may have a hearing loss (‘everyone mumbles these days’), lack of understanding of hearing loss and what to do about it, and simply avoiding to address the issue.

In addition, many people who need a hearing aid are not given the referral they need to see a specialist. Just under half (47 per cent) of those with a significant hearing loss in the 55-74 year age group who went to their GP with complaints of hearing loss failed to get an onward referral to audiology services.

Powerful messages

The project team has worked with more than 30 hearing aid users to develop eight video tutorials that can be played on a DVD player, computer or via the internet, which provide advice on how best to use hearing aids and communicate with family and friends.

The tutorials reinforce information and advice given at the clinic appointment and include information, animations, videos and powerful messages from users of hearing aids about their personal experiences.

At the end of each tutorial there is an interactive quiz so the patients can review what they have learned. The tutorials, which total an hour in duration, will also offer friends and family an important insight into how best to support the hearing aid user by developing a better awareness of how best to hold conversations with people with hearing loss.

Anne Darby, an experienced hearing aid user of 30 years, played a key role in providing a patient perspective for the project. She said: “This is a fabulous resource for people receiving their hearing aids for the first time. It explains the mechanics of hearing and how hearing aids work, supports people through the difficulties of adjustment, lets the viewer know that they are not alone, points to other resources and, most of all, is reassuring to the patient and their partners, family and friends.”

The team has received a £235,000 NIHR Research for Patient Benefit grant and is now in the process of evaluating the potential benefits of the tutorials. Involving 200 patients, it is expected to find substantial success in terms of better hearing aid use and improved communication with family and friends.

Successful outcomes

The first [hearing](#) aid patient to complete the trial, Hazel Hampton said she was delighted with the tutorials, adding: “If I did not have the DVD I might have given up wearing my [hearing aids](#). Because of the DVD I have entered a much easier self-directing and informative environment, instead of a wild woolly and noisy world. I think the DVD is a well thought out educational resource.’

Dr. Gareth Smith, President of the British Academy of Audiology, said: “In the new NHS arena, where evidence-based, clinical innovation is the key to successful service delivery and outcomes for patients, NBRUH are in a fantastic position to spearhead positive change. This award-winning project, simple in design yet so effective in practice, sets the bar for other healthcare professionals to consider how they can follow this example to improve patient out-comes. The challenge has now been set for the audiology profession to incorporate this model of information delivery into everyday practice.”

Provided by University of Nottingham

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