

Does chemical exposure in the workplace affect hearing?

March 4 2015, by Robert Burgin



One in six Australians record some form of auditory loss.

With one in six Australians recording some form of auditory loss, a new study by The University of Queensland is examining how exposure to chemicals in the workplace can affect employee hearing.

Led by Dr Adrian Fuente of the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, the study aims to identify the most effective [hearing tests](#) to detect problems caused by [chemical exposure](#), and the safe levels of exposure to maintain healthy hearing at work.

Dr Fuente said certain occupations were more at risk than others, including painters, spray-painters, those working in textile, clothing and footwear factories, and aviation and lab workers.

"While much is known about the dangers of [noise exposure](#) in the workplace, the public is often unaware of the role that certain chemicals can play in causing early [hearing loss](#)," Dr Fuente said.

"Hearing loss is relevant to many Australians and it affects not just the individual, but also their family, friends and co-workers.

"It can also cause isolation, including avoidance of social situations, problems communicating at work and miscommunication at home."

The study is currently seeking employees working in the painting, spray-painting, textiles, clothing, aviation and jet fuel, footwear and histology labs industries to participate in the research.

As part of the study, participants will have their hearing tested via non-invasive procedures.

"There is still not enough understanding of which levels of chemical exposure are safe for our ears," Dr Fuente said.

"I encourage people working in these industries to participate in this vital research, the outcomes of which could have a definitive impact on the Australian workplace in the pursuit of healthy hearing for all."

More information: Those interested in participating in the study should contact Laura Sheridan on l.sheridan@uq.edu.au or phone 07 3346 7489.

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: Does chemical exposure in the workplace affect hearing? (2015, March 4) retrieved 23 April 2024 from

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