

Developing countries lag behind in hearing screening for newborn infants

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An RUB study demonstrates: in many countries, hearing screenings of newborn infants are inadequate or are not performed at all. Whereas an early diagnose is crucial in order to treat the disorder successfully.

Tests immediately after birth

Prof Dr Katrin Neumann's study demonstrates that developing countries in particular are lagging behind in the diagnosis and treatment of hearing impairments. As head of the department of phoniatics and pedaudiology at the St. Elisabeth Hospital in Bochum, her aim is to establish a worldwide hearing screening standard for [newborn infants](#).

Researchers compile data from more than 151 countries

For her study, Prof Dr Katrin Neumann, in collaboration with an international team of colleagues, has analysed the current status of [hearing tests](#) for infants from 151 countries. However, the study has not yet been concluded; several countries are yet to submit their surveys. The results so far: more than 50 per cent of the participating countries have introduced hearing tests for infants, even if the methods applied rarely meet Western standards. Moreover, it has been determined that the screening is more efficient in countries where it is regulated by the government. The study has also confirmed the assumption that the prevalence of infantile hearing impairments in underdeveloped countries

is much higher than hitherto suspected.

The hidden disease

With her ongoing study, Prof Dr Katrin Neumann has compiled a data basis which can be used to advocate for a standardisation of so-called hearing screenings at the WHO. Since 2007, she has been collaborating as an expert in projects run by the World Health Organisation. "In specialist circles, hearing impairments are often referred to as the hidden disease, because the disorder attracts only little attention. This is what I wish to change." In order to ensure sustainable treatment of [hearing impairments](#) in newborn [infants](#), an early diagnosis and a therapy begin in the first half-year of baby's life is crucial. Treatments carried out in that period are particularly effective.

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