

Difficulty hearing may keep older patients from participating in their health care

April 3 2019

In a *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* study of 13,940 adults age 65 years and older, nearly half reported difficulty hearing, and those reporting difficulty said that they had lower levels of active participation in their health care.

The study examined "patient activation," or the knowledge, skills, and confidence that equip patients to participate actively in their [health care](#). Compared with those reporting "no trouble" [hearing](#), those reporting "some trouble" hearing had a 42 percent greater risk of low patient activation. For those with "a lot of trouble" hearing, the comparable risk increase was 70 percent.

The study's authors noted that clinicians' awareness of hearing loss, and the use of simple steps to improve communication, could allow patients to more actively participate, which could lead to improvements in their health.

"Poor hearing puts patients at risk for poor outcomes," said senior author Dr. Jan Blustein, of New York University. "For example, people with hearing loss may be unable to understand their doctor when she explains medication changes. Attending to hearing loss could pay off in greater patient involvement in care and [better health](#)."

More information: Ji Eun Chang et al, Difficulty Hearing Is Associated With Low Levels of Patient Activation, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.15833](https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.15833)

Provided by Wiley

Citation: Difficulty hearing may keep older patients from participating in their health care (2019, April 3) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-04-difficulty-older-patients-health.html>

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