

Care home study highlights poor care for dementia residents with hearing problems

September 12 2023, by Mike Addelman



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Hard of hearing people with dementia are not receiving the care they

desperately need, according to a new study by University of Manchester researchers.

The anonymized study of 10 staff from eight care homes, published in the journal *Disability and Rehabilitation*, revealed how [residents](#) were largely unable to access audiology services.

The problem is particularly relevant in the UK, where around 70% of long-term care home residents have dementia and 85% have [hearing loss](#).

"People with dementia already are some of the most vulnerable people in society," said Lead author Dr. Hannah Cross, "And because [hearing](#) loss in these people can exacerbate agitation, confusion, increase loneliness and social withdrawal, the task of providing [high quality care](#) is even more important."

All the participants in the study said audiologists rarely visit care homes compared to other health care professionals; two said they had never had seen one at all.

Though most of the staff interviewed by the researchers believed hearing support was beneficial, lack of training meant they did not have the knowledge to implement it effectively.

Staff, for example, found it hard to recognize if residents' communication difficulties are caused by dementia or hearing loss.

Training on hearing loss for care home staff is not mandatory in the UK.

But basic hearing support training, hearing aids, communication techniques and other tools such as flashcards, would make a difference to residents' quality of life, argue the researchers.

Dr. Cross said, "Often residents with dementia are expected to attend audiology clinics outside their care home, mostly in a hospital or clinic. That causes stress and confusion for residents, on the occasions they are able to attend.

"For care home residents with dementia, it is completely up to professional care staff and audiologists to support them and their hearing needs."

The study was conducted online at the height of the pandemic, when care homes were largely cut off from [public access](#).

However the problems caused by the pandemic seemed to make little difference to audiology services received by residents who were already receiving minimal care.

She added, "We think a radical overhaul of training and service provision is needed if we are to help people living in care homes with [dementia](#) and hearing loss.

"Staff Hearing Champions' have been recommended, though without proper incentivization it's not clear how much of an impact they would make for staff who already have a very high workload.

"But without a doubt, greater co-operation between [care homes](#) and audiology services is desperately needed, so residents have equitable access to health care services, ideally within the care home.

"And training for staff around hearing aid maintenance and communication techniques will also make a difference."

More information: Hannah Cross et al, "We're just winging it". Identifying targets for intervention to improve the provision of hearing

support for residents living with dementia in long-term care: an interview study with care staff, *Disability and Rehabilitation* (2023).
[DOI: 10.1080/09638288.2023.2245746](https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2023.2245746)

Provided by University of Manchester

Citation: Care home study highlights poor care for dementia residents with hearing problems (2023, September 12) retrieved 12 May 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-09-home-highlights-poor-dementia-residents.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--