
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Hearing Care, as part of basic care in a senior home.

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Claire Tollenaere¹

1: Ahosa Vzw, Ghent, Belgium

Background: World wide, 1 in 6 people is hearing impaired. Age-related hearing loss is the most frequent cause. The number of deaf and hearing impaired persons increases as the population is getting older.

Unfortunately, the impact on quality of life is underestimated.

Hearing is an important part of communication. Several studies of the World Health Organization show the consequences of bad hearing s.a. isolation, frustration, loneliness and even acceleration of the dementia process. A hearing disability is invisible and problems are often not recognized.

A great part of the elderly people lives in a senior home. The prevalence of hearing problems there is estimated around 80% as average age is about 87 years. The ringing of the telephone, a knock on the door, the radio, the television, the alarm signals are difficult to hear. This absence of familiar sounds produces a feeling of confusion and anxiety instead of safety and recognition. Communication is often done 'on the job' ignoring some special needs of the hearing impaired. Facemasks may make things even more difficult. The elderly hearing impaired, their family and caretakers have often little or no knowledge about the risks of untreated hearing loss, about innovative technologies in hearing aids and other hearing devices and about some interactional adaptations to improve their quality of life.

Aim: Installing high-quality hearing care in senior homes in order to stimulate the inclusion and participation of hearing impaired elderly.

Method: A team of AHOSA vzw, a Flemish interest group for persons with a hearing loss who communicate in spoken language, developed a project to put into the spotlight the importance of hearing care in senior homes.

Basic relevant information is given to all the persons who are involved in the care process, but also to the residents themselves and to their family.

Physical and digital workshops include a theoretical approach as well as practical information s.a. how wearing a hearing aid, changing a battery, seeing that the person didn't understand the message... Tips and tricks are given to improve communication.

The workshops use tools such as a PowerPoint presentation, an instruction film and leaflets.

We started with a pilot study: a partnership between the association AHOSA VZW and the Senior Home Sint-Jozef, Assenede Belgium, with support of the Artevelde Highschool Ghent.

During this trial period, the workshops and tools are adjusted by means of feedback of all participants, and the effects are measured by pre- and post questionnaires.

Result: This participatory process with co-creation leads to a workable model of hearing care for all senior homes in Flanders, and can be a national or an international policy recommendation in a later stage.

The scoop can be more durable by also aiming at integration of this model in the education programs of schools and departments that prepare students to work with elderly people.

Conclusion: A well-developed Hearing Care model as part of basic care in a senior home leads to better quality of life.