

HEARING HEALTH CARE NEWS™



JULY 2019

Hearing Health Care News™ Volume 3, Issue 7

Welcome to our latest edition of Hearing Health Care News™!

We are now in the thralls of Summer, and hopefully this means a little time for rest and relaxation for you and your family! July is the month we take to celebrate our country's heritage. As we pay homage to our flag and everything it stands for – unity of country and family – we remember the heroes that have come before us and allow us to proudly fly this flag and celebrate our love of country and each other.

Even as we celebrate, play in the sand and waves, or hike a canyon, we must take the time to appreciate our relationships with others. These relationships are grounded in our ability to communicate – and hearing is 50% of the communication equation! I recently wrote a research report on Centurions (people who live to be 100+ years young), and the most striking finding was that social interactions and strong relationships were found to be the two most influential factors that increase life expectancy. Neither of these can be achieved without proper hearing health care.

Unfortunately, for many people living with untreated hearing loss, the summer is another lost opportunity to experience the fullness of quality of life and relationships with others. But it doesn't have to be this way. The early treatment of hearing loss has significant health and cognitive benefits, including reducing the risk of developing Dementia.

Every month, this newsletter endeavors to highlight the importance of hearing by stressing '**Hearing Health Care News**'; and to illustrate how hearing plays a vital role in your life, and in your overall health care.

This month we will highlight the many medical conditions recognized during July and how they relate to your Hearing Health Care needs. As always, the push is to educate you, your family and loved ones on how your hearing health care is a vital piece of your overall health care; and how healthy hearing is necessary for a healthy you. This month our country recognizes many medical

conditions, including: **Eye Injury Prevention Month, UV Safety Month and National Cleft & Craniofacial Awareness & Prevention Month.** We will explore each of these, and how they relate to your most important sense - hearing!

Eye Injury Prevention Month: Some people say 'your eyes are the windows to your soul', and perhaps they are right, because your eyes are truly linked to your cognitive function and well-being. A breakthrough technique to measure cognitive function is 'Pupillometry' – a measurement of pupil size that correlates to the amount of mental effort (e.g. the more mental effort the larger the pupil size). Recent studies have found that individuals who treat their hearing loss exert significantly less effort listening to a conversation in background noise, than people who do not treat their hearing loss. This increased effort, referred to as cognitive load, is linked to cognitive decline and Dementia.

Proper vision health is also important, as it too can reduce our risks of cognitive decline. Recent reporting in major scientific journals, including reports from the National Institutes of Health, has made significant strides in understanding the links of vision loss and cognitive decline. Although much work is still to be done, scientists and medical clinicians accept data that indicates people with distance vision problems are 2-3 times more likely to develop cognitive impairment (compared to those with normal vision).

The prevalence of blindness and vision impairment increases rapidly with age among all racial and ethnic groups. Cases of early age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy are expected to double and quadruple, respectively, in the next 20-30 years.

Elderly people with untreated poor vision are significantly more likely to suffer from Alzheimer's disease and other forms of Dementia than their normal seeing counterparts, according to a study published in the American Journal of Epidemiology. Poor vision, like poor hearing, can reduce the amount of social and

HEARING HEALTH CARE NEWS

physical activities in adults – thus increasing the risk of developing Dementia. In addition, according to the American Optometric Association, significant near-vision loss in older age may correlate with increased Dementia risk.

UV Safety Month: Coming from a family of self-proclaimed 'Beachologists', I have spent much of my summers in the sun, and now spend plenty of time visiting my Dermatologist! Fortunately, there are ways to protect yourself from the sun's damaging UV-B and UV-A rays, both of which can damage your eyes and skin. Too much UV exposure can cause vision problems, damage to your eyes, suppress the immune system and cause skin cancer. Fortunately, you can minimize risk with some simple tips, including wearing a hat and protective clothing, staying in the shade and using (the right) sunscreen.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosis, and the most preventable. This cancer develops primarily on the areas of sun-exposed skin, including the scalp, face and ears. Fighting this form of cancer can involve surgery, radiation, and even chemotherapy. In the case where the ear is involved, hearing loss may be a side-effect (and is also a side-effect of many chemotherapies). It is important to always have your hearing tested before, during and after chemotherapy to maintain peak auditory performance and cognitive function.

National Cleft & Craniofacial Awareness & Prevention Month: Cleft palate or cleft lip and palate

can affect many different functions, including speech and hearing. Cleft lip is a term used to describe a notch, opening or separation in the upper lip; whereas cleft palate describes an opening or separation in the roof of the mouth, which is either easily seen, or is covered by the lining of the roof of the mouth.

'Glue ear' is a very common condition in children with cleft palate. This 'glue ear' is a form of middle ear infection (otitis media with effusion) in which 'sticky' fluid will develop, and get stuck, behind the eardrum. As a result, sounds cannot pass efficiently through the ear canal and eardrum to reach the inner ear. For most children without a cleft palate, glue ear is a temporary condition that they grow out of by around eight years old as their Eustachian tube and other cavities grow larger. However, in children with a cleft palate there are likely to be additional structural abnormalities of the Eustachian tube and the muscles may not work as well. Almost all children with a cleft palate will experience these infections even before the age of one and may persist throughout childhood.

Check back next month for more on our 'Hearing Health Care News™' series to learn about how hearing is the key to an active and healthy lifestyle as you age.

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