

OCTOBER 2013 HEARING SOLUTIONS MONTHLY MEETING UNITED HEALTHCARE

The cost of hearing aids is the number one barrier for millions of Americans suffering from hearing loss.

The Hearing Solutions SIG has been following with interest the efforts of United Healthcare to address this issue and are honored to have a United Healthcare staff Audiologist from Dallas, Texas provide us with a progress update.

Tysha Powell, Au.D., (Doctor of Audiology)
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Over 12 years of clinical experience in audiology serving all populations, ranging in age from infants to geriatrics that include hospital, ear nose and throat office environments.

Extensive business management and consulting experience of audiology and ear, nose, and throat practices.

Recognized in her field for her level of care, professionalism, and overall expertise.

Has provided educational seminars at universities, consumer seminars, and regional/national audiology meetings.

Graduated with Doctorate in Audiology from the University of Florida. Master's in Audiology from the University of Georgia, and Bachelors in Speech, Language and Hearing from Southeastern Louisiana University.

Licensed audiologist in the state of Texas and Georgia.

Resides in Dallas, TX.

(NOTE: FOR THE Q&A PORTION OF THIS MEETING AND MANY OTHER ADDITIONAL INTERESTING COMMENTS SEE HEARING SOLUTIONS FORUM TOPIC UNITED HEALTHCARE)

GARY SHEPARD, SIG LEADER





Hearing loss: There's more on the line than just missing the punch line.

Tysha Powell, AuD



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Agenda

- Hearing loss symptoms
- Social components - the ability to connect with family and friends
- Hearing loss related to couples
 - Improving your love life
 - Improving quality of life
- Relationship between hearing loss and medical conditions
- Positive effects of treatment
- Resources



Signs of Hearing loss

- Turning up the volume of the TV or radio
- Problems hearing over the telephone
- Problems hearing the doorbell or the telephone ringing
- Difficulty hearing people talking, especially from behind you
- Asking people to repeat themselves - or saying "what?"
- Misunderstanding or 'forgetting' what has been said
- Cupping hands behind the ears to hear better



Effects of Hearing loss

Social effects:

- Avoiding social gatherings and noisy surroundings
 - *Social isolation* = significant risk factor for morbidity and mortality
- Conversations become shorter, less frequent, less spontaneous and less personal
- Becoming less attentive
- Problems at work and reduced income



Effects of Hearing loss

Psychological consequences:

- Shame, guilt and anger
- Embarrassment
- Problems concentrating
- Sadness or depression
- Worry and frustration
- Anxiety and suspiciousness
- Insecurity
- Low self-esteem / self-confidence



Hearing Loss: Hard on Couples

- Frustration and suspicions of selective hearing are among problems faced by couples with one partner suffering from hearing loss.
- **70%**- become **frustrated** when their partner is unable to hear them
- **16%**- feel **ignored**
- **8%**- feel **sad** or **hurt**
- **Almost half** of the 1,065 respondents said their partners' hearing loss had **adverse affects** on their marriages.



Source: Reuters. Published on hear-it on November 24, 2008

Treating Hearing Loss May Benefit Your Relationship

- Half of the participants said their partners were reluctant to have their hearing tested
- Almost as many respondents said their partners refused to acknowledge their hearing loss
- Couples should encourage healthy hearing habits in each other
- Take action for your hearing health. Treatment is available

“It is very important for people in relationships to connect with each other, verbally and emotionally. Those who don’t feel heard, figuratively or literally, can feel isolated or depressed.”

John Gray, PhD



Over 90% people with hearing loss can benefit from hearing aids



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Medical Conditions Related to Hearing Loss

Diabetes and Heart Disease

People with **diabetes** are **twice as likely** to have hearing loss than those who do not have diabetes. (NIH)

There is also a strong relationship between **heart disease** and hearing loss.

Medications for Inflammation & Erectile Dysfunction

Regular use of aspirin, acetaminophen, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, and phosphodiesterase inhibitors increases the risk of hearing loss in men. (American Journal of Medicine, University of Alabama)

Higher Risk of Falling

People with a mild hearing loss are ~**3x more likely** to fall.

Every additional 10-decibels of hearing loss increased the chances of falling by 1.4 fold. (Johns Hopkins University)

Dementia and Hearing Loss

People with mild, moderate, and severe hearing loss had **2x**, **3x**, and **5x** the risk of developing **dementia** over time.

(Johns Hopkins University)

Treatment Improves Quality of Life

Improved
Social life



84%

Hearing aid users reported it was easier for other people to talk with them.

Improved
Relationships



66%

Hearing aids helped them overcome difficulties connecting with family and friends.

Improved
Love life



10%

Hearing aids made it easier to engage in intimate conversations.

How Hearing Aids Help

- Hearing aids add volume to the sounds important for **understanding speech**, based on *your* individual hearing loss
 - Most people lose the ability to hear high-pitched sounds first
- They automatically vary the amount of amplification, allowing you to **hear soft sounds** while keeping **loud noises at a comfortable level**
- They use **directional processing**, which enhances the sounds in front of you more than the sounds behind you



Treatment Improves Quality of Life

In a National Council on the Aging (NCOA) survey of 2,300 hearing impaired adults, hearing aid users reported significant improvements in relationships, self-confidence and safety.

Improvement Area	Hearing Aid User (%)	User's Family (%)
Relations at home	56	66
Feelings about self	50	60
Life overall	48	62
Relations with children, grandchildren	40	52
Mental health	36	39
Self-confidence	39	46
Sense of safety	34	37
Social life	34	41
Relations at work	26	43



How Hearing Aids Help

Why it is that you can hear speech but that you cannot necessarily understand speech?

In conversations, the **important consonant sounds** are **high-pitched** and **softer** compared to the less important low-pitched vowel sounds.

The high-pitched sounds carry the meaning of words, helping us understand speech.

– Example: Cash vs. Gas

As a result, conversations may sound loud enough but not clear enough.

Low-pitched	High-pitched
Vowels: i, o, u	Consonants: f, s, th
	Carry the meaning of words, helping us understand speech
Louder	Softer; harder to hear

Hearing aids help speech understanding by making soft high-pitched sounds louder.



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Hearing Aids Work Better When You...

- **Directly face** the sounds you are trying to hear and **move closer**.
- Reduce background noise.
 - Mute the TV while trying to talk.
 - Go to a restaurant when it is less busy.
 - Select a corner table and take the seat facing the corner.
- Ask others to speak a little slower and to get your attention before speaking.
- Don't speak from the next room.



If You Know Someone with Hearing Loss...

- When asked to repeat something, say it a bit slower or use different words. Don't change topics without giving warning.
- Don't cover your mouth when speaking. Look directly at your partner.
- Speaking a bit louder might help, but shouting makes it even more difficult.
 - When we shout, our speech gets distorted, making speech harder to understand.

Being a “human hearing aid” for a partner can be tiring. Encourage them to **ask their doctor for a hearing test** and **get treatment**.

Early treatment may improve **quality of life** and may lead to **better outcomes with hearing aids**.



hi HealthInnovations

- *hi HealthInnovations* is a hearing health company that provides solutions for hearing testing and offers high quality, custom programmed hearing aids with advanced features such as:
 - Comfortable open-fit design
 - Directional processing
 - Tri-mode noise reduction system
 - Advanced feedback manager
 - Automatic gain control



- Hearing aids from *hi HealthInnovations* are available at a fraction of retail price:
 - \$749 - \$949 per device
 - Some UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage plans may offer additional savings, so check with your health plan
- Hearing aids come with: ~ 6 months of free batteries and accessories, a 70 day no-risk trial period, and a one year manufacturer warranty

***hi HealthInnovations* provides excellent customer service, counseling, and free programming adjustments and aural rehabilitation**



Obtaining Hearing Aids

Deciding to get hearing aids can be difficult, but *hi HealthInnovations* makes it simple to obtain them:

Step 1:

Test your hearing – primary care clinic or hearing professional or *hi* HealthInnovations location

Step 2:

Select the style of your hearing aid

Step 3:

Place an order – online, phone, mail or in office

855-523-9355 or
www.hiHealthInnovations.com



Resources

- 1) **National Council on Aging: *Hearing Loss: It's a Family Affair***
ncoa.org/improve-health/community-education/hearing-loss-its-a-family.html
- 2) **Hearing Loss Association of America** hearingloss.org
- 3) **The National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders** nidcd.nih.gov