1. Introduction

Hearing loss and dementia often co-exist, which can impair their assessment and management.1

Hearing loss is one of the largest potentially modifiable risk factors for dementia from midlife onwards.2

However, further research is needed to understand the specific mechanisms underlying this association, as well as optimal interventions for patients and carers.1,3

Therefore, the aims of this research were to:

1) Develop a strategic agenda for future dementia and hearing studies.

2) Co-design a toolkit of strategies and resources to improve the inclusion of under-served groups in dementia and hearing research.4

2. Methods

Funder: The NIHR via its Clinical Research Network, Research for Patient Benefit programme, and Nottingham Biomedical Research Centre.

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI): Embedded throughout the research, including the formation of a new PPI advisory group.

Participants: A range of stakeholders, including people living with dementia and/or hearing loss, carers, clinicians, researchers, and members of under-served groups (e.g. ethnic minorities).

Study 1: Focus groups with 24 stakeholders to develop strategic directions for future dementia and hearing research.

Study 2: Experienced-based co-design process1 with ~30 stakeholders to co-create a toolkit to widen participation in dementia and hearing research (see Figure 1).

Analysis: Reflexive thematic analysis and peer debriefing were used.4,7

3. Results

Preliminary analysis of the Study 1 focus groups produced the following priority areas for future dementia and hearing research:

- Examine the prevalence, onset, and progression of various hearing conditions and auditory symptoms in people living with dementia.
- Identify appropriate means of screening and assessing hearing and cognition for people who may have both hearing loss and dementia.
- Improve post-diagnostic support for people with dementia and their families, including assessing their hearing and communication needs.
- Develop hearing and dementia training for health and social care professionals and facilitate interdisciplinary approaches to care.
- Develop and evaluate appropriate aural rehabilitation interventions and practices for people living with dementia and their families.
- Design and assess interventions to improve social participation and psychological wellbeing for people living with these conditions.
- Develop hospitals, clinics, and care homes that are both dementia-friendly and hearing-friendly.

4. Discussion

This research will produce strategic priorities for future studies in the area of dementia and hearing research that are valued by key stakeholder groups.

This research will also produce a toolkit of strategies to improve the representation of under-served groups in dementia and hearing research, such as appropriate recruitment, data collection, and dissemination practices.

Consequently, this research will provide a foundation for high-quality, inclusive research and practice in this field in the future.

5. References

3. Heffernan et al. (2022). ‘The worse my hearing got, the less sociable I got’: A qualitative study of under-served groups in dementia and hearing research.